

Political Affairs

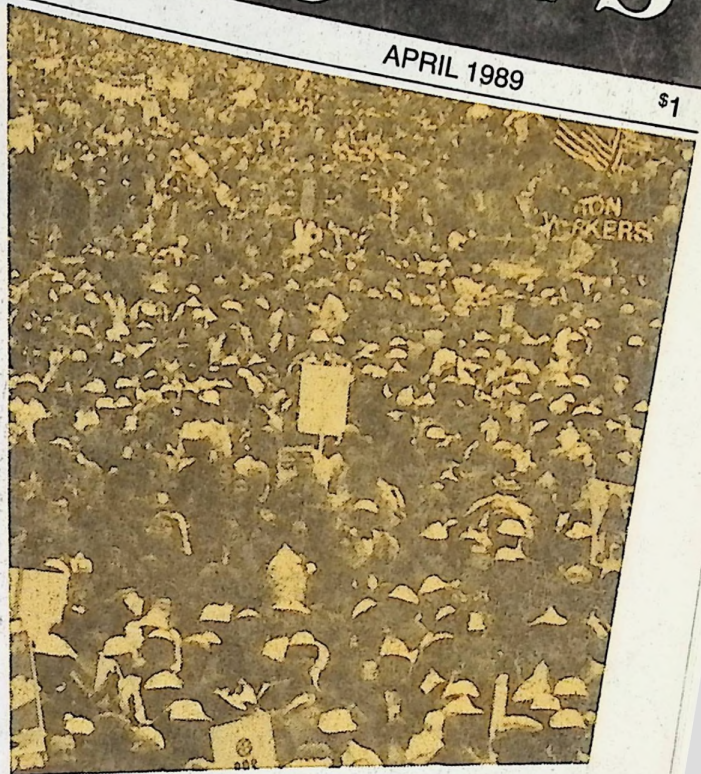
JOURNAL OF MARXIST THOUGHT

APRIL 1989

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Speaking out for

**PEACE
JOBS
EQUALITY**



**BEWARE THE POISONED ECONOMIC
PROPAGANDA** • *Victor Perlo*

**THE IPC STRIKE: LANDMARK LABOR
STRUGGLE** • *John Case*

**THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE U.S.
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**Theoretical Journal of
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Political Affairs (ISSN 0032 3128) is published monthly, except for combined September / October, by Political Affairs Publishers, Inc., 235 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10011. ☎212 989-4994, the address for all correspondence.

Manuscripts are invited. If a manuscript return is requested, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Subscription rates: \$10 for one year (individuals); \$15 for one year (institutions); foreign subscriptions—Canada and Mexico, \$11 a year; all others, \$12.50 a year; single issues—\$1. Second class postage paid at post office in New York, NY. Postmaster: Send changes of address to: Political Affairs, 235 West 23 St., New York, NY 10011.

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April 1989 Vol. LXVIII, No. 4

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Beware the Poisoned Economic Propaganda

VICTOR PERLO

THERE IS A CONCERTED DRIVE BY GOVERNMENT officials, capitalists, and their economists to persuade the American people to accept lower living standards as required to eliminate weaknesses in the U.S. economy. This would not make the economy more healthy. The real objectives are to increase profits and to improve the international competitive position of U.S. capital at the expense of the American working class, farmers, and middle class people. Counters to these fallacious, selfish arguments have been too limited. They are urgently needed. Within the overall propaganda offensive, there are a number of specific, interconnected arguments, and policy propositions:

- Americans are consuming too much: "We" are consuming more than we produce. Consumption should be curtailed.
- The excess of consumption is at the expense of savings and investment. Personal and business activity should be shifted from consumption to savings and investment.
- The lack of investment contributes to nearly stagnant productivity. Productivity needs to be increased rapidly so that the United States can regain its competitiveness in the world and hold down production costs.
- Boom conditions caused by excessive consumption and budget deficits have caused labor shortages and inflationary wage increases. These must be checked before they get out of hand.
- Reduction in the federal budget deficit is vital to prevent acceleration of inflation. This must be accomplished by reducing non-military spending.
- Higher interest rates are needed to slow economic growth, to prevent further decline in unemployment that would create a dangerous inflationary situation.
- Unemployment, therefore, must be kept, at least, at a certain minimum level, to prevent

destabilization of the economy.

- We have become dependent on foreign capital to balance the excess of imports over exports. This has made the United States the world's largest debtor. Slower economic growth, higher labor productivity and lower labor costs are needed to improve the trade balance.

The overall impact of these interlocked judgments and proposals is to justify continued demands for wage cuts and other concessions; stubborn resistance to wage increases, and, if necessary, government intervention to prevent improvement in labor conditions; further drastic reductions in government spending that benefits working people; increases in taxes on workers; and reduction in taxes and increases in subsidies to capitalists.

Big business politicians and economists argue that failure to follow the suggested set of policies will lead to faster inflation, higher interest rates and, ultimately, stifle investment, cause even more business and bank failures and plunge the country into a recession.

Propaganda along these lines aims to convince millions not to struggle for improvements, but to accept austerity and sacrifices. It aims to keep Congress in line with Bush Administration budget and other initiatives, and to distract mass movements from effective mobilization for people demands.

In every respect, the interests of labor, of the majority of workers, professionals, farmers, and many non-monopoly capitalists; indeed of the American nation, are in policies exactly the opposite of those listed. What follows, here is a refutation of each of these capitalist judgments, arguments and proposed policies.

'WE' CONSUME IN EXCESS

The use of the term "We" is deceptive. Undoubtedly, the billionaires, the Wall Street sharks, the officials getting huge salary hikes, the upper layers of the corporate bureaucracy, the main recipients of the rapidly rising flow of dividends and

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interest, are consuming "too much" by ordinary human standards. The media tell of the conspicuous consumption of the wealthy, from the luxury estates and affairs of the junk-bond chief, Michael Milken, to Dan Quayle's \$25,000 ski-junket.

But *most* employed workers cannot be consuming too much, for their real wages have been on the decline for 15 years, according to official statistics, which, if anything, are biased to minimize the decline.

As for the 32 million poverty stricken, officially counted, 60 million realistically counted, they are obviously consuming too little by human standards—inadequate or no housing; insufficient food, medical care, educational opportunities, little or nothing for entertainment and recreation, not to speak of luxuries.

Jean Mayer and J. Barry Brown write:

Many families now appearing in bread lines across the country come from the traditional bedrock of our economy. In Pennsylvania, skilled steelworkers comprise a large percentage of the clientele in the more than 200 soup kitchens that have sprung up there since 1989. In Waterloo, Iowa, once productive farm families now stand in bread lines to eat. In California's famed Silicon Valley, mothers working fulltime at high-tech jobs supplement meager earnings with handouts from food banks.

The recent economic recovery is having little impact on the nation's 20 million hungry citizens—an unprecedented situation. The paradox of an economic recovery highlighted by hunger and homelessness stems from several factors.¹

These, they say, are the sharp downward trends in real wages, the even more drastic decline in the real minimum wage, and the weakening of Federal anti-poverty programs, especially subsidized housing. The increasingly skewed income distribution, they calculate, amounts to a "subsidization of the wealthy of \$35 billion annually" at the expense of "poor and middle income groups."

Shopping malls and supermarkets show a superabundance of goods, along with successful cartel-like arrangements to keep prices moving upward, such as Kellogg's accelerated three price increases on cereals last year. Outlets catering to lower income groups have difficulty moving goods because of stagnant or declining purchasing ability of customers.

Furthermore, the collective "we," rich and poor, capitalist and worker, are obviously not consuming more than we *can* produce. Industry is operating at 84 percent of capacity. Agriculture is subsidized by government to produce far less than the farmers and land can yield. There are 15 million men, women, and youths who are unemployed—counted out of the labor force or able, at most, to get marginal part-time work. They constitute a reserve for substantially expanded output.

Imposition of austerity, stagnant or declining mass consumption, would not be offset by increased investment and export, but would hasten the extreme of overproduction that precipitates a recession. Major material gains by the majority of the people, sharply increasing their purchasing power and actual consumption, would soon call for added investment to provide the needed supplies, and stimulate the entire economy. True, this potential could be thwarted by politically motivated big business economic sabotage, a factor not unknown in U.S. history.

'SHORTAGE' OF SAVINGS AND INVESTMENT

Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan has become the Establishment's chief oracle on economic and financial matters, considered by some a close second to President Bush in influence. True, his track record is not unblemished. Immediately after his appointment in July 1987, he started pushing up interest rates, helping to precipitate the stock market crash of October 1987. Now he is forcing up interest rates even further and faster, to the consternation of Wall Street and the displeasure of some Bush associates. His weekly warnings about the danger of inflation are used to justify all the positions cited at the start of this article.

In his testimony, last January, before the House Banking Committee, he referred to "paucity of aggregate domestic saving in recent years," featured by "a sharp fall in private saving;" and correspondingly a "low level of net investment." He bewailed the "limited success" of "tax policies to augment household and business savings" over the last decades, and confessed his inability to find a way to improve things.²

Indeed, the repeated tax cuts for the rich and the corporations have multiplied their wealth and profits and, hence, increased their potential

for savings and investment. The argument about "low savings" is based largely on Commerce Department statistics showing personal savings in 1988 of \$147.8 billion or only 4.2 percent of disposable personal income.³ But this is only a fraction of the personal savings available for investment. It simply means that, alongside of the savings of the rich, the poor go into debt by nearly as much.

A Department of Labor survey found that each of the lowest three-fifths, 60 percent, of the population spent more than their disposable incomes in 1985. That is, they went into debt for a substantial part of their spending, and, for the lowest fifth, for far more than half of their spending! Of course, this includes farmer families and others who had net losses for the year.

But the upper fifth of all families, between them getting one-half of all personal income, saved 21.4 percent of their disposable income. Along with the second highest fifth, they saved an amount equal to 12.1 percent of the disposable income of all families.⁴ The corresponding figure for 1988 is more relevant than the 4.2 percent representing their savings minus the indebtedness of the lower 60 percent of the population. For technical reasons, as well as the rapidly increasing concentration of income, the 12.1 percent must be considered a minimum figure for 1988.

In any case, the bulk of savings are accumulated within the corporate framework. Overall, gross private savings, as officially measured for 1988, came to \$730.9 billion, with the personal savings amounting to only one-fifth of the total.⁵ This amounts to 16.9 percent of gross domestic non-governmental products—quite a different scale of savings than the publicized 4.2 percent. Moreover, for this calculation the Commerce Department uses the "net" private saving rate of 4.2 percent. Using the actual available savings of the upper income groups instead, brings the total to 1,004.9 billion, or 24.9 percent of the relevant gross domestic non-governmental product.⁶

Rounding this out, one can say that savings came to a trillion dollars, one-fourth of all private income. In short, there was plenty of savings, that could provide a tremendous potential for growth and improvement if used for the public benefit.

Furthermore, if the Administration was really anxious to raise the net rate of personal savings, one of the most effective means would be to slash the military budget and consistently

to follow a policy of détente and nuclear disarmament. A number of economists and political scientists have compiled evidence showing that, when public fear of nuclear war is highest, the rate of savings is lowest, but when détente relieves the fear of nuclear war, people have more confidence that there will be a future, and are more willing to save for it. Professor Joel Slemrod of the University of Michigan noted that:

Among major industrial countries the U.S. had one of the lowest savings rates and Japan one of the highest . . . And in 1986 public opinion polls in 33 countries indicated that the U.S. ranked highest in the degree of nuclear fear while Japan ranked next to lowest.⁷

FACTS ABOUT INVESTMENT

The share of business investment in the gross national product was higher in the 1970s than in the 1960s, and still higher in the 1980s⁸ despite the fact that the share of *net* personal savings was lower in the 1980s than in either of the two previous decades. The priority of investment was especially marked last year. Between 1987 and 1988 "real" private non-residential fixed investment increased 9.5 percent, while "real" consumption increased only 2.8 percent, within an overall increase of "real" gnp/ of 3 percent.⁹

The *Fortune* magazine¹⁰ features an article by Kate Ballen under the headlines:

THE NEW LOOK OF CAPITAL SPENDING . . . American companies are investing as they never have before. That has helped them lift manufacturing productivity faster than in any expansion since World War II.

She points out that the "smartest" managers are "finding they can do more with less and are doing better by adding equipment rather than bricks and mortar. That is how the very rapid rises in productivity are obtained." (Not to mention the very rapid pace of plant shutdowns and permanent worker layoffs—VP). She cites various data to support the conclusion that the priority increase in fixed capital investment will continue in 1989.

Supporting her general point, within the 9.5 percent overall real increase in fixed business investment in 1988, the part devoted to structures declined a fraction of a percent, while that invested in equipment increased 13.4 percent.¹¹

What the country needs is to recapture the billions of savings of the rich to finance the accu-

mmulated backlog of urgent investments, on deteriorated roads and bridges, to end shortages of public facilities of all kinds, and especially to construct millions of public housing units.

'STAGNANT' PRODUCTIVITY

The Establishment claim of stagnant productivity is based on a long-standing fraud perpetrated by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Briefly, it ignores physical measures of production and, instead, defines production mainly as the sum of real incomes distributed. These are disproportionately influenced by real wages, which have been declining since the early 1970s. Actual productivity in manufacturing, the industrial core of the economy, has been rising at a rate of 4 percent per year, on the average, since 1946, the fastest long-term growth in history. It has been fully maintained during the 1980s.¹²

The latest available figures, for January 1989, released by the Federal Reserve Board and BLS, show a productivity increase in manufacturing of 3.4 percent over the level for January 1987.

The Labor Department uses cruder tricks to supply those who claim that productivity increases are slower in the United States than in other capitalist countries. It claims that, over the decade 1977-1987, manufacturing productivity increased 32 percent in the United States, 70 percent in Japan and 58 percent in Italy. But to arrive at these results, it uses indexes of production that differ, in some cases wildly, from the official indexes of the various countries.

If one uses, instead, the official indexes of the three countries, the decade-long productivity increases in manufacturing come out to 37 percent for the United States, 34 percent for Japan, and 40 percent for Italy¹³.

What this country needs is not faster growth in productivity, but more of the rewards for high productivity going to the workers who create it.

WAGES AND 'PUSH-PULL' INFLATION

The standard argument is that the country, formerly, was feeling the effects of "demand-push" inflation—that is, pressure from customers—but has now shifted to "wage-pull" inflation. Greenspan says that he "fine-tunes" interest rates to prevent them from rising so fast as to precipitate a depression, but to have them fast enough to prevent a further significant drop in unemployment that he assumes, would result in "inflation-

ary" wage increases.

Media comments strive to give the impression that such wage increases are already occurring. *Barron's* editor, Robert M. Bleiberg, wrote last August of a sharp decline in weekly claims for unemployment compensation and a "discomfiting rise in employment costs." He referred to a *Time* magazine story saying jobs are going begging from coast to coast:

California amusement parks, Connecticut insurance conglomerates are scrambling to staff their operations any way they can. The worker shortage extends from chambermaids to nurses, cashiers to engineers.¹⁴

Tell it to the masses of jobless in the Hartford ghetto!

The table below shows that the long-term downtrend in real wages is continuing in almost all sectors of the economy. Overall, between January 1988 and January 1989, the consumer price index increased 5.2 percent, hourly wages 4.0 percent, for a decline of 1.1 percent in real hourly earnings.¹⁵

TABLE
PERCENT CHANGE IN NOMINAL EARNINGS OF PRODUCTION
WORKERS AND NON-SUPERVISORY EMPLOYEES
IN THE PRIVATE ECONOMY, JANUARY 1988 - JANUARY 1989

Industry Group	Nominal Increase	"Real" Change
TOTAL	4.0	-1.1
Mining	2.3	-2.8
Construction	1.8	-3.3
Manufacturing	3.1	-2.0
Transport & Utilities	2.8	-2.2
Wholesale Trade	4.6	-0.6
Retail Trade	3.7	-1.4
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	6.0	+0.8
Services	5.1	-0.1

SOURCE: BLS releases.

The broadest declines in real wages, ranging from 2.0 percent for manufacturing to 3.3 percent in construction, were in the production sectors, that are also the highest wage sectors. The wide decline in construction coincided with an exceptionally rapid increase in construction employment. Evidently the outcome was not determined by supply and demand, but by the relative power of employers and the only partly-organized workers.

The only group showing a tiny increase in

real wages was finance, where some of the killings made by the bankers, takeover kings, and condominium developers spilled over to lower-level employees. Even in retail trade, with the lowest average wages of all these sectors, there was a decline in real wages, and a rise in money wages of only 3.7 percent. Thus, the publicity given to cases where retail clerks are being hired at \$7 per hour (and few can be found to take the jobs) represent special situations, such as, where there is no available transportation from the inner cities to the suburban malls.

For manufacturing, the 3.1 percent rise in money wages per hour was more than offset by the 3.4 percent rise in productivity per hour, yielding a slight decline in labor cost per unit. Nonetheless, prices of finished goods increased 4.4 percent between January 1988 and January 1989.¹⁶ Thus, declining labor costs offset all or part of other cost increases, and exerted a marked deflationary influence.

Under these circumstances, the more militant, determined attempts of industrial and transport workers to stop giveaways and to realize significant wage increases in new contract negotiations are, at most, partial catchups for recent losses. Opposition to labor's demands on the grounds of "inflationary impact" are without merit and should be refuted.

American production workers have sustained extreme losses in real wages and in their share of the values they produce over the past two decades. Successful campaigns to organize millions more workers and, then, to win large increases, reductions in hours, improvements in working conditions, will cut into profits. But, thereby, they will reduce the gross imbalance in the U.S. economy, moderate slightly the extremes of income distribution, reduce unemployment and poverty and create more favorable conditions for affirmative action programs strong enough to markedly improve the situation of African-American and Hispanic workers.

THE BUDGET DEFICIT

The budget deficit remains above \$150 billion yearly, and far more if the extra-budgetary social security surplus accumulation is omitted. The national debt has reached 3 trillion dollars. The budget deficit grew because of the radical slash in upper-income individual and corporate income taxes in 1981, combined with accelerating mili-

tary expenditures and sharp reductions in public welfare and social programs, from 5.8 percent of the gnp in 1980 to 3.8 percent in 1988.¹⁷ Further serious reductions in these programs urged by President Bush for fiscal 1990, are counterbalanced by proposed renewed increases in military spending. These, if carried out, will prevent significant reduction in the deficit, despite demagogic claims that this will occur, through statistical manipulations that have been exposed by the General Accounting Office and the Comptroller of the Currency.

Economist Francis M. Bator, attempting to justify budgetary policies, wrote:

The deficits of 1981-83 were, on balance, good deficits; together with easier money in 1982 they saved us from an even worse recession. But the 1984-87 deficits have been bad deficits. Government purchases and personal consumption have grown too fast, and to prevent an inflationary boom, the Federal Reserve has had to use high real interest rates mercilessly, squeezing . . . domestic private investment and net exports.¹⁸

He also calls for "fiscal tightening" at the expense of consumers. Bator's arguments are dealt with elsewhere in this article.

A progressive alternative to current budgetary trends would be to cut the military budget by \$100 billion, a fully appropriate response to the Soviet reductions, and gain another \$250 billion by restoring the 1980 tax rates on wealthy individuals and corporations. Then all cuts in social programs could be restored, and the country could go well beyond previous limits in building public housing, in dealing with environmental problems and providing useful employment on needed public projects for the jobless, and at the same time balance the budget.

RISING INTEREST RATES

For the last year interest rates have been rising, and the pace picked up. The Federal Reserve Board has substantial power to influence interest rates, by actions which increase or decrease liquid reserves in the vaults of the banks. The "prime rate" charged banks has gone up from 8.5 percent a year ago to 11.5 percent as of the end of February, 1989. Every time Greenspan and his fellow board members nudge up interest rates another notch, his explanation focuses on the supposed fear of inflation, especially his fear of wage-costs rising. Thus, in his previously men-

tioned testimony of January 24, he said:

The labor market is showing clear signs of tightening . . . the available evidence points to a high probability of stepped-up wage pressure should unemployment decline significantly further." For unemployment to fall below 4½ percent "would provide sustained impetus to inflation.

To buttress this line, he uses exaggerated and distorted figures of "increases in compensation," and recited the "disappointing productivity performance" suggested by the spurious Labor Department statistics.¹⁹

Because of the sustained rise in interest rates over a long period and the increase in debts as the main form of capital holding, as well as the rise in the government debt and consumer debt, interest received by capitalists and bankers has swelled enormously. It has become the main means, along with the profits of control, for collecting the surplus value created by the exploitation of labor.

In the fourth quarter of 1988, personal interest income was at an annual rate of \$605.5 billion, up 10 percent from a year earlier. It was more than six times the profits appropriated in the form of dividends. Twenty years ago personal interest payments came to \$53.2 billion. Thus, interest income increased more than 11 times, while total personal income increased less than 6 times (Of course, a large part of that increase was due to inflation).

The receipt of interest in the fourth quarter of 1988 exceeded the total of wages and salaries paid in manufacturing by a wide margin, and more than doubled the total of wages paid to manufacturing production workers.²⁰

Naturally, only a small part of that \$605 billion went into the accounts of small savers, of workers and lower salaried employees. The importance of interest to the capitalist class is enhanced by the fact that a significant part of it is exempt from federal income tax.

The fact that such a large portion of property income flows in this passive form shows the increasing parasitism of U.S. capitalism, and exposes the hypocrisy of establishment panegyrics to "entrepreneurship." Clearly, corrective action is in order. The ability to do so was established during World War II, when, despite heavy borrowing needs, government action held interest rates down to 2 percent .

'DESIRED LEVELS' OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Towards the end of World War II, President Roosevelt promised a program including jobs for all who were able and willing to work. The CIO, which had organized basic industry, campaigned for a practical full employment program. However, all that ever came out of Congress were acts calling for "high" levels of employment, without, naturally, any practical measures to achieve these amorphous goals.

This approach corresponded to the influential economic theories of the British economist, John Keynes, who preached the desirability of a level of unemployment, not so high as to leave much capacity idle, bringing down prices and profits; nor so low as to unduly increase labor's bargaining power, and in that way reduce profits. In short, in theory, there was the search for an "ideal" rate of unemployment which would lead to maximum profits.

Accordingly, capitalist economists defined minimum acceptable rates of unemployment, which would be defined as "full employment." From 2.5 percent, this moved up to 4 percent, and by the 1970s to 6 percent, and the criterion changed to how much unemployment labor would stand for without vigorous action.

During the 1980s, the Reagan offensive seriously weakened the unions, so employers found that when the official rate of unemployment fell below 6 percent, it did not lead to successful struggles by the workers, nor prevent enforced wage cuts and other takeaways. Reflecting this situation, Greenspan testified:

Accordingly, the wage pressures associated with a 5.5 percent jobless rate today are less than they would have been 10 or 15 years ago. It also is unlikely that a few tenths of a percentage point up or down . . . would change to a high probability of stepped-up wage pressures should unemployment decline significantly further.

In part, that assessment reflects the fact that unemployment now is well within the range of 4.5 to 6.5 percent that encompasses most estimates of the "natural rate" of unemployment. . . . Unemployment below the natural rate presumably would provide sustained impetus to inflation, while unemployment above the natural rate would tend toward disinflation.²¹

From the big corporation and banking viewpoint, either of these diversions from the "natu-

ral" state of affairs would mean lower profits. Thus Greenglass, the monetarist, uses the Keynesian argument in one of its most basic features.

During the recent presidential election campaign, Frederick C. Thayer of the University of Pittsburgh faculty wrote:

There is widespread bipartisan agreement that a 5 to 6 percent unemployment rate acts as a "natural" and desirable check on wage and price inflation. Thus, when people find work these days, the media announce new fears of inflation. When jobs are lost, . . . the headlines cheer stock market rallies, and a decline in inflation fears. The pervasive belief that putting people to work will damage the economy is turning "jobs" into a non-issue, but questions should be asked about this strange policy of enforced unemployment. . . .

Is either candidate ready to renounce the long-term, anti-job policy? Is a permanent army of the unemployed and underemployed better or worse than the economic controls that might be needed for a real jobs policy?

If unemployment can be reduced in wartime (less than 2 percent in World War II), is it possible that infrastructure, environmental and similar needs are now as important to our future as the making and firing of guns was in the 1940s?²¹

Of course, neither Bush nor Dukakis met this issue in 1988; and it will take a future campaign of labor and other progressive forces to raise to an action-level the need for and possibility of a real full employment program. Remember that the concern of the Establishment is not really over inflation as such, but rather over the rate of profit. Labor, on the contrary, aims to improve conditions at the expense of profits.

Thayer is right that a full employment program would require controls, provided they do not become controls to hold down wages while prices creep upwards. What is needed at this stage are price controls and rollbacks, along with freedom for wages to increase, and government assistance to such increases through increasing the minimum wage, enforcing affirmative action programs, and other measures. As during World War II, a large army of civilian volunteers are needed to enforce price controls.

IMPORT EXCESS ARGUMENT

An argument effectively used by those who claim "we consume more than we produce" is to point

to the excess of imports over exports. The resulting deficit in the balance of payments is offset by increases in foreign holdings of U.S. dollars and securities. Adding these to other investments here and abroad, it is claimed that the U.S. has become the world's largest debtor nation, owing more than \$300 billion to the rest of the world.

While that figure must be qualified, it is true that the imbalance in foreign trade is a major destabilizing factor in capitalist world economy. However, it is not due to an irresponsible desire of ordinary Americans to consume too much. Rather is it due to the finding of U.S. corporations that they make more profits from production abroad than by producing in the United States for export. They used the political/military advantages derived from World War II to build an unmatched foreign economic empire, a process continuing on a large scale. The nominal value of U.S. corporate foreign investments is far less than a valuation based on a realistic multiple of the profits derived. If such a correction were made, it would appear that the United States is not yet a net debtor.

The income on all U.S. foreign investments still exceeds substantially the outgo on foreign holdings in the United States, although the excess has gradually declined from \$47.4 billion in 1984 to \$25.0 billion in 1988.²² The aim of the argument is to assure conditions whereby the capitalists will continue to get the profits on their foreign investments while workers are forced to absorb cuts in living standards to cover the outpayments of revenue on the "foreign debt" of the United States.

Reestablishment of a balance in payments requires that measures be taken to compel U.S. corporations to reduce their share of production abroad, and to reopen plants closed here in favor of foreign production. It also requires cancellation or radical reduction of Third World debts to imperialist banks. The normal surplus of U.S. exports over imports in trade with Latin America has been reversed, as these countries are forced to curtail imports and instead export foodstuffs and other goods needed by their own people to cover the interest payments to the bankers.

Clearly, the interests of U.S. workers are the opposite of those of the bankers. U.S. workers have lost millions of jobs from the shift to a heavy excess of imports. Correction of this, even with respect to Latin America alone, would lead to a

gain of hundreds of thousands of industrial jobs.

Another important remedy is to end the gross discrimination against trade with socialist countries. True, the United States already has a surplus of trade with the USSR, but it is on a very small scale and consists mainly of export of surplus grain. Increasingly, Western European countries are forcing chinks in the trade blockade imposed by the Pentagon. The aim of crippling the Soviet Union, Cuba, and other socialist countries through such a trade blockade never worked and never will work. From the viewpoint of the American people, who want peace, and American workers, who want jobs, American non-military capitalists who want business and see it going to West European and Japanese competitors, the blockade must go.

Since the U.S. blockade against trade with China was lifted, with the idea of converting China into an anti-Soviet bastion, U.S. trade with China has risen to the order of \$10 billion per year, far more than the total of U.S. foreign trade with all other socialist countries put together. The "strategy" of this may well prove a failure, as Soviet-Chinese relations are normalized. In any case, without the aim of preparing for nuclear war against the socialist countries, the blockade makes no sense. Its lifting for all socialist countries would soon raise the volume of that trade to many tens of billions of dollars, with a large surplus of industrial exports from the United States.

Certainly this would help the socialist countries improve living standards more rapidly than at present, but it would also help American working people reverse the decline in living standards with which the majority is burdened, and to start a new period of progress in a real peace economy. □

Notes

1. *The New York Times*, Feb. 25, 1989.
2. Alan Greenspan, testimony before House Banking Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs, January 24, 1989.
3. *Survey of Current Business* [SCB], January 1989, Table 2.1, 12.
4. *Statistical Abstract of the U.S.*, 1988, Table 688, 420).
5. SCB, January 1989, Table 5.1, 15.
6. *Ibid.*, and *op. cit.*, Table 1.7, 9.
7. *Business Week*, March 6, 1989, 18.
8. The averages are 1960-69, 9.85 percent; 1970-79, 10.66 percent 1980-1988, 10.90 percent, calculated from "Economic Report of the President," January 1989, T. B-1, 308. SCB, Jan. 1989, T 1.1, 8.
9. SCB. *op. cit.*, Table 1.2, 8).
10. March 13, 1989.
11. SCB, Jan. 1989, T. 5.13, 17).
12. See, Victor Perlo, *Superprofits and Crisis*, International Publishers, New York, 1988, 62-69.
13. BLS, "Output per Hour, Hourly Compensation and Unit Labor Cost in Manufacturing, Twelve Industrial Countries, 1950-1987," Washington, D.C., December 1988; United Nations, "Monthly Bulletin of Statistics," various issues; U.S. Dept. of Commerce, *Business Conditions Digest*, various issues.
14. *Barrons*, August 22, 1988.
15. Some people may ask, "With the difference of 1.2 point between 5.2 percent and 4.0 percent, isn't the decline in real earnings 1.2 percent?" No, 1.1 percent is correct. There isn't space here to explain the arithmetic. [VP]
16. BLS releases of these months.
17. *Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 1990*, page 2.9.
18. *The New York Times*, November 4, 1987).
19. Greenglass, *op. cit.*
20. SCB, January 1989, Table 2.1, 12; *The National Income and Product Accounts of the United States, 1929-82*, Table 2.1, 0. 90; 1985 *Annual Survey of Manufactures*, Census Bureau, M 85 (AS)-1 Table 2, 1-8).21. Greenglass, *op. cit.*
22. *The New York Times*, October 12, 1988).
23. SCB, July 1989, Table 4.1, 69; January 1989, Table 4.1, 14.

The International Paper Strike A Milestone Battle Against Concessions and Unionbusting

JOHN CASE

THE FOUR STRIKING UNITED PAPER-Workers International Union locals in Jay, Maine; Depere, Wisconsin; Lockhaven Pennsylvania and Mobile, Alabama, on October 9, 1988, terminated their 16-month long strike against International Paper Company. *The New York Times* termed this strike the "premier labor struggle of the '80s."

The IP strike was a lightening rod, an explosion, that gathered and expressed in a concentrated form the energies that are gaining momentum in the American labor movement. As is often the case in sharp battles, the underlying issues and trends governing developments are exposed more clearly than in more peaceful times. The energies focused in the paperworkers' strike have been building throughout the '80s as the attacks of corporations and the Reagan-Bush administration have cut ever more deeply into living and working conditions of all U.S. workers, especially industrial workers.

So, in the paperworkers' struggle, many ideas and concepts (some new and some conventional) regarding the corporate concession drive, strike tactics, collective bargaining, political action, the relationship between the civil rights and the labor movements, the legal rights of workers and corporations, etc., underwent a severe test. Many of the critical challenges facing the trade union movement were reflected in this strike.

Jay, Maine is a virtually all-white rural community. It is a one-industry, one-company town. Election records show that President Reagan carried Jay in 1980 and 1984 by comfortable margins. Jesse Jackson made his appearance at the weekly Wednesday rally in the Jay high school in December of 1987. Three thousand people crammed the gymnasium. Most had never considered supporting Jackson for president. But

by the conclusion of the rally, a "marriage" had taken place. Strikers, without incomes other than unemployment compensation, lined up to make contributions to his campaign. At the same time, the national outreach tactic of the strike became a powerful component in the coalition of progressive forces that embodied the Jackson campaign.

Jackson kept his promise to the workers to go to all the picket lines, and to make justice for workers a theme of his campaign, including a national demand to outlaw strikebreaking. This spark started a fire in Maine. By the time the Democratic caucuses took place in January 1988, major forces in the Maine labor movement had endorsed Jackson, and Jackson's 32 percent showing in the caucuses was more than double what had been predicted.

There is a valuable political truth in the mutual inspiration and the multiplication of their respective strength that the paperworkers' struggle and the Jackson presidential campaign gave to each other. Achieving a progressive change in direction in our country requires unity and solidarity between the civil rights movement and the labor movement, especially with industrial workers, at its core.

By virtue of this unity, the paperworkers' national struggle achieved a special stature and dignity as a symbol of North-South, Black and White, worker unity. And Jackson found a solid base of multiracial, working class support that made it possible for him, unlike any previous Democratic presidential candidate, to stand firm on fundamental class issues and needs of ordinary people in the face of tremendous pressure from reactionary, pro-Big Business, racist forces in the leadership of both political parties and in the mass media.

The history of the Jay strike records convincing evidence that progressive industrial unionism is a most powerful reservoir of strength in

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the struggle for social justice. The workers' struggle began as a strike to defend themselves against unjust concessions demanded by International Paper Co. But when 10,000 trade unionists converged on Jay, Maine in July, 1987; when Jesse Jackson embraced their struggle as a symbol of his Presidential campaign against injustice, their fight became transformed into a struggle on behalf of the rights of all workers, for a change in the basic direction of the country.

WHO WON THE IP STRIKE?

The paperworkers had a developed strategy for the strike. But more important than this, they achieved an extraordinary level of membership, community and overall labor mobilization. There was no shortcoming of will or effort, discipline or devotion, in carrying out the strategy for the strike.

At first glance the defeat of the strike seems absolute. There is no new labor agreement. The great majority of the strikers do not have their jobs back. The scabs remain in the plant. The economic objectives of the company were achieved: straight time for Sundays and holidays, complete work-rule "flexibility," ending the Christmas shutdown, etc., albeit at a reported cost of \$2.5 million in Jay alone.

These are, in fact, the "truths" of the strike as analyzed by *Pulp and Paper*, a leading corporate trade publication and mouthpiece for the American Paper Institute.

Last October, the United Paperworkers International Union unconditionally ended its 16 month strike against three of International Paper Co.'s mills. The end of the strike highlighted some truths about labor-management relations:

- Companies will run their mills with salaried people or replacement workers in the event of a strike.
- Premium pay for Sunday and holiday work is becoming a thing of the past.
- The pooled voting strategy attempted by several UPIU locals working for IP wasn't successful. (January, 1989)

In the wake of the strike, other companies are rushing in to demand that they share in the spoils. Renewed concession demands, including those obtained by IP, plus 6-year agreements with wage increases substantially below inflation have already been concluded at Boise Cascade.

The average first year wage increases in 1988 contracts was 0.7 percent, following on the heels of 0.4 percent in 1987. This year 120 U.S. mills will be negotiating contracts, compared with 84 in 1988.

Management in the paper industry and beyond are hoping for big gains at the expense of the workers by intimidating and threatening workers with IP-like reprisals should there be resistance to their demands. Further on in *Pulp and Paper's* analysis, however, there is a less confident paragraph:

In November, all locals employed by IP, regardless of what union they belonged to or their current bargaining status, were invited by UPIU to join a pool to coordinate their bargaining. The International will supervise the bargaining to seek four goals for all IP mills: ensure the rehire of all ex-strikers, prevent subcontracting of existing permanent jobs, maintain current premium pay for Sundays and holidays, and maintain current lengths of contracts . . . Pooled voting may also be used this year by locals negotiating with Champion, Boise Cascade, Temple Island, and Packaging Corporation of America . . . UPIU would like to negotiate on a national level with IP and other paper companies. This would give it more clout, similar to what union members in Canada enjoy when they negotiate new contracts . . . However, companies are not likely to acquiesce.

Who won the IP strike? Is the paperworkers' union stronger or weaker as a result of the strike? Are prospects for the paperworkers better or worse than before the strike? Was the labor movement's struggle against concessions advanced or set back by this strike? Is all hope for the IP strikers lost?

We submit that the answers to these questions are not as simple as they might appear from the statements of corporate public relations personnel or the anti-union editorials and biased reporting of major newspapers and TV anchorpersons.

In fact, a case can be made that the paperworkers union is *stronger* than before the strike; the prospects for paperworkers are better as a result of the important achievements attained by the strike. The labor movement's struggle against concessions has been advanced considerably by the experience of this strike. And all hope for the IP strikers is not lost.

Some might challenge these assertions as

fancies of a modern Don Quixote. But closer examination of this strike reveals important progress was achieved in identifying the essential ingredients necessary to defeat the Reagan-corporate attacks on workers. More importantly, the weaknesses that resulted in the strike's defeat were shown to be surmountable.

THE CORPORATE CONCESSION DRIVE

Business in the paper industry is booming. Most plants are operating near or at productive capacity. Since the relative decline of the U.S. dollar three years ago, competition among paper producers has been characterized by an intense struggle over market share. The conclusion of this struggle may substantially realign the relative strengths of the competitors once the boom subsides. A recession, later this year, is anticipated by most analysts, but it is not expected to dramatically reduce operating rates in most paper grades. High capacity utilization has encouraged rapid price increases, averaging 12 percent in 1988, with further increases of 5 to 7 percent in 1989. One might think, therefore, that net profit margins could be raised simply by raising prices. But since all companies could equally enjoy this benefit, it offers no competitive advantage.

Many companies have expended huge sums, and assumed high levels of debt, to finance major capital projects. Capital spending for 1988 was over \$10 billion, a 21 percent increase over the previous year, five times the national average. Further expansion plans are underway for 1989, despite warnings of a recession.

IP plans major acquisitions of foreign owned paper companies. In Maine alone, SD Warren (Scott Paper) in Skowhegan and Boise Cascade in Rumford are spending a reported \$707 million.

While gross profits (before diverting interest payments and research and development costs) are high, net return on equity is less than half of that for the major military contractors, for example, where R&D is subsidized and competition often takes the form of who pays the highest bribes. This struggle for capital is also intensifying a restructuring trend in the industry. Foreign investors, particularly the Japanese, are beginning to acquire substantial stakes in both U.S. and Canadian forest products companies. Merger, takeover and leveraged buyout efforts in the industry are on the increase.

As early as 1986, four of the biggest paper

corporations—Boise, IP, Georgia Pacific, and Weyerhaeuser—decided to mount an aggressive campaign to cut labor costs and break unions. This was not an accident, but a product and part of the extraordinary pressures for the maximization of profits at all costs generated by Reaganomics. While the specific combination of factors in each industry might vary, the causes of the concession drive are to be found not in a *particularly* evil corporation, but in the growing instability and crisis-ridden condition of the U.S. private profit system.

In its battle against the workers, the high rate of capacity utilization in the industry paradoxically contributed to IP's ability to prevent a larger decline in its business during the strike since buyers who were displeased with the poor quality paper produced by scabs had no alternative suppliers who were not also at capacity.

IP expects to finance its expansion through a combination of inflation and wage cuts. According to union sources, IP's labor costs amounted to only 7 percent of production costs. The common sense wisdom that the reductions in labor costs achieved by the company were not worth the investment in the strike, is refuted when one appreciates the fact that, according to IP stockholder reports, each dollar invested in wages and benefits yields nearly \$4 in gross profits. And any cut in labor costs—whether through wage cuts, or through the introduction of new means of production—correspondingly increases the profit/wages ratio and the value added by each hour of labor.

The introduction of new technology and equipment is the driving force behind the the paper companies' demands to apply a new division of labor. Many of the old crafts and trades are being combined, even some of the traditional papermaking skills. New skills in electronics, chemical processes and hydraulics are being emphasized. But each new job combination or newly created job is introduced with the objective of undermining the wage structure and eroding the strength of the union bargaining unit.

This is also reflected in the company demands to write "flexibility" clauses into the new labor agreements. "Flexibility" would give management complete discretion to assign virtually any worker to any job. In addition, the drive to streamline production takes two other forms: 1) to compel production workers to perform higher

skilled maintenance jobs without additional compensation—thus eliminating that skilled trade; 2) and, to the same end, subcontracting-out the maintenance operations.

These flexibility clauses and subcontracting rights give new exploitive power to management. They threaten seniority protection. They spur speedup with no compensation. They foster unsafe working conditions.

The use of non-union subcontractors lays the groundwork for a ready-made scab workforce in the event of strikes. Placed in the context of the corporations' determination to modernize the productive forces, completely at the workers' expense, the collision between the corporations and the workers was and is inevitable. The pressures leading to the IP strike will continue to build, not lessen, and further, even bigger, collisions are bound to occur.

The fragmentation of collective bargaining agreements in the U.S. paper industry is a major factor in making the separate locals prime targets for concession demands. *But in Canada, this brutal tactic cannot be effective because Canadian workers bargain on a national basis.*

All these economic factors contribute to the motivation behind the concession drive. But without the ability to hire and train a replacement workforce, International Paper might still have failed in its battle against its workers.

The approval of strikebreaking by the Reagan Administration and the National Labor Relations Board is well known, but strikebreaking reached new depths in this battle. Bolvig, Edwards and Kennedy (BE&K), a nationwide corporation exclusively devoted to strikebreaking, made it possible for IP to satisfactorily avert the difficulties of employing untrained permanent replacements in a highly skilled industry. BE&K professional strikebreakers trained an entire replacement workforce. This constitutes a new and dangerous development in U.S. strikebreaking. The unionbusting consultants of the late '70s and early '80s have built a special industry whose "product" is the destruction of labor unions. Current NLRB and Administration policies encourage this development.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE IP STRIKE

Before the IP strike, most workers in the paper industry did not believe that a national concerted campaign against the corporation could happen.

There is no history of national bargaining in the paper industry. There are a few multi-unit contracts, but the overwhelming majority of labor agreements cover individual plants. And more often than not, there is more than one union and more than one labor agreement with different expiration dates representing the different maintenance trades and crafts in each mill. These contracts all have no-strike clauses and, until very recently, expired at various times over a given three-year period. The paper companies are now seeking six-year agreements—a direct attack on the movement for national bargaining.

The IP strikers proved that a national solidarity campaign could be waged. They proved that mobilization of the rank and file could overcome parochial, regional, craft and jurisdictional obstacles. More important, they proved that local unions could survive, operate, and even strengthen themselves even while working without a contract. This is a key issue. For the only way enough locals can be combined in a legal, decisive, concerted action against the company is if a large number are prepared to "walk"—keep working without a contract—for a year or more beyond the expiration dates and can coordinate their effort and timing to the maximum advantage of the workers.

The wealth of tactical experience gained in the IP strikers' campaign to unite all the IP shops could itself fill a long book. There was the "pool" campaign, initiated following the lockout at IP's Mobile, Alabama mill. It began as a "Workers Council" to coordinate bargaining and build solidarity action in the four other IP mills where contracts were due to expire later and it was aimed to create a force of workers committed to a unified vote on the resolution of the key concession issues. There were also: the "one-on-one" campaign, where strikers called workers in the plants, where contracts were expiring, to personally explain the issues and the cause of solidarity; the Outreach campaign, where strikers sent teams to the non-striking facilities; the CAR-AVAN campaign where strikers toured communities in their region with the message of solidarity; the strike and solidarity network which built lasting ties between shops and communities that had never heard of each other, and has permanently introduced new forms of organization within the paper workers union, and new concepts of in-plant organization that can transform

the locals into battle-ready organizations, and that rely upon rank and file organization and strength.

An important component in the fighting unity and determination of the Jay workers was the fact that they had previously overcome most of the craft divisions in the mill. Unlike many mills, the Jay mill united the overwhelming majority of both maintenance and production workers in a single contract, in a single union.

The IP strike proves that not only is national concerted action by fragmented bargaining units possible, but only such action can hope to counter the formidable weapons of the corporations, establish national bargaining, and defeat the concession drive. The goal must be one contract, one union for all who work in the industry.

The further development of the "pool" concept around the best settlements is essential to keeping the pressure on IP and the other paper companies. Obviously, this must be a key tactic in repudiating the new threat of 6-year agreements. Under such agreements, locals would be compelled to violate contracts in order to mount a national concerted action, inviting severe, onerous government and judicial sanctions.

The encouragement by the United Paperworkers International Union of the establishment in the mills of "Union Awareness" committees that involve all unions, including the building trades, in educating workers to understand and carry out in-plant strategies, is a vitally important development. National unity cannot happen, cannot overcome the spontaneous tendencies of division and competition fostered by the companies, without rank and file initiatives to organize a majority in every mill to support the national unity program.

But this must be done in a principled way. There are those who, for selfish reasons, thrive on inner union struggle, who have personal ambitions, or who play the part of provocateurs and thus only assist the corporations' efforts to divide the union and make it incapable of action. There are also those who favor militancy and strikes as ends in themselves. They soon become isolated because strikes involve great sacrifices by the people, and must therefore be guided by responsible and sober objectives. The phony militants invariably aid the company, since their tactics always widen disunity and heighten tensions

among the workers.

At the time of the October meeting of IP locals in Nashville, Tennessee, 20 IP mills were working without contracts. The International Union had fulfilled its commitment to refuse to sign any contract until the strike was resolved. So the question needs to be asked: If the solidarity and outreach campaign of the IP strikers was so effective, why was the decision made to terminate the strike? Why was there not instead a decision to call a national strike?

WAS THE IP STRIKE WINNABLE?

The local representatives of the striking locals at the Nashville meeting, reported that the readiness of IP workers for a national strike "was not yet there," although the time was fast approaching when the strikers' seniority rights would terminate.

How can this be explained? The company, in its propaganda to the non-striking mills, pointed to its continuing record profits, along with its success in replacing the striking workers. It made it clear that the same fate awaited any other workers who joined the strike.

What would have been the result of a strike poll in the other mills, what lack of resolve could there have been in any quarter, had the striking workers successfully shut down production at all, or any, of the mills? There is no question that the balance of forces would have been radically different. The company's principal propaganda weapon in the non-striking mills would be firing blanks.

This question is of critical importance since no strategy for walking contracts, even if adopted from the beginning, can guarantee that a number of mills will not be locked out, or be forced to strike through provocations. Therefore, strike tactics, even under the onerous conditions of the Reagan-Bush anti-labor NLRB, as well as injunctions of state and federal judges against any interference with mill production, must be equal to the task of shutting down production.

It was repeatedly emphasized by some union leaders, attorneys and others at the IP rallies that the union's winning card was the "inability" of the corporation to run the mills with scab labor. Many of the strikers accepted this argument. But, clearly, the workers in the non-struck mills did not. The argument's appeal to the justifiable pride that paperworkers have in their skills and

experience, did not have a sound objective basis. Recent labor history is replete with examples of companies that have maintained production operations, despite big short-time losses invested in scab-training and especially when only a small portion of their total production capacity is being struck. These factors held true at IP, where there was a miscalculation of the impact of the BE&K professional strikebreaking force and the company continued to report record profits.

Another theory, developed late in the strike, was that a "corporate campaign" of public pressure and eventual boycott directed against companies that shared interlocking directorates with IP could bring it to heel. Although the campaign made a major contribution to building the union's national solidarity network, this campaign did not, and could not, overcome the failure to close down production.

HOW TO COUNTER CORPORATE STRIKEBREAKING

What must a striking union do: when the government and the courts award permanent jobs to scabs; when injunctions ban mass picketing and demonstrations at plantgates; when a governor vetoes legislation banning professional strikebreakers; when a state's Department of Environmental Protection refuses to close a mill despite poison emissions, caused by improperly trained scabs, that have forced the evacuation of an entire town?

In circumstances such as these, the only recourse is direct action by the people themselves. Unjust and repressive laws and injunctions cannot be overcome unless the people make them unenforceable and politically untenable for office holders who hide behind them.

In most cases the only way the injunctions against mass picketing can be overcome is by defying them: defying them with enough public support so that politicians cannot remain neutral or "above" the vital issues involved; defying them on the basis of the political and constitutional rights that are at stake; defying them by means and methods that create a political crisis in the relationship of forces, that compel a resolution of the conflict on different terms.

The biggest obstacles to directly challenging the injunctions are the legal sanctions the company can invoke against the union, not only against the local but the national union. These sanctions are real, and menacing. They include

financial and punitive damages for all lost production, and discharge and imprisonment for workers held in contempt of court. Given the anti-union, Big Business bias of the Reagan-Bush administrations, the NLRB and the courts, in most cases the unions cannot by themselves overcome these obstacles. But independent political organizations of the workers, their families, their natural allies and supporters, can.

A point that is often lost in the debate over "legal" tactics in strikes is that law and the judges' interpretation of constitutional rights are always an expression of the relationship of political forces in society, not a force standing apart or above the conflict of classes and interests. This requires that every strike become "political" when the corporations demand that striking workers "take what the company offers or be fired."

The right of workers to carry on a peaceful struggle for justice without being fired or imprisoned is a political issue, not fundamentally an economic or "collective bargaining" issue. The infringement by government and the courts on this right is an act of political repression, an act of wage-slavery. In these times, strike tactics must be directed against *both* company and political targets.

In addition to the above considerations, the defiance of unjust injunctions is not without legal and constitutional precedent. While there is not space here to fully explore the legal issues, a few important ideas should be introduced.

First, the doctrine of "clean hands" has been frequently held to be applicable in cases where labor is charged with violating a court injunction and a contempt citation is asked by the company against the union (or its supporters). The union can invoke the "clean hands" doctrine under which the court may deny a remedy to a claimant who has not acted "equitably." Evidence of "unclean" company "hands" might be: 1) company violations of the injunction; 2) company conduct that violates good conscience and is outrageous to any reasonable person, such as serious violations of OSHA and environmental laws, use of obvious untruths to mislead the public, the violation of criminal statutes, resorting to unfair labor practices, etc.

Second, there is the defense of "necessity". The basic principle is that a person may engage in what is nominally criminal activity, where the

action is in good faith under the belief that a serious, imminent and greater harm is about to occur and that the activity can prevent that harm.

Third, many of the damage awards against unions for injunction violations are often made by the same judge who imposed the order. However, some states have a protection against this. The Maine statute, for example, requires that contempt proceedings in the case of labor disputes be tried by a jury in the county where the contempt is alleged to have occurred.

Political strikes require new forms of worker and solidarity organization. Here too, the paperworkers in Jay pioneered many new concepts and tactics that, if carried through and fully developed, can bring victory.

The paperworkers exerted much energy in demonstrations, mass rallies, letter writing, legislative initiatives, lobbying, an aggressive media relations campaign, etc., to obtain some leverage against the company. These efforts were successful on several fronts. The union, by-and-large, defeated the company propaganda that they were "greedy overpaid workers standing in the way of IP's desire to stay competitive and save jobs." Unemployment compensation was won for the strikers.

The enactment of far-reaching legislation protecting strikers was forestalled only by executive veto. In response to the solidarity campaign, Maine Congressman J. Brennan has introduced an important bill in Congress to block the use of permanent replacements. Strikers and supporters of the union were elected to town government leadership and passed sweeping environmental and tax reassessment laws that sought to pressure IP. However, legal maneuvers by the company have, so far, prevented most of these measures from being implemented. The political action of the workers had a big impact, but it fell short on the key issue of an on-time shutdown of the mill and, consequently, on the fate of the struggle for a national concerted action against the company.

Nevertheless, the weekly Wednesday night solidarity rallies in Jay provide a possible model for a new kind of political organization, and a new approach to the difficult task of shutting down scab operations. These meetings, which regularly were attended by a thousand people, may yet become the most powerful and lasting legacy of the Jay strike. They were a form created

by the strike—but they were bigger than the strike.

Not only the strikers, but workers from all over New England, families and citizens of the communities surrounding the IP mill, any political representatives or candidates for public office, including for President of the United States, who desired to establish "pro-worker" credentials, journeyed to these meetings and found common ground and inspiration on many issues. The structure of these meetings remained informal. But the point is that they contained the seeds of a powerful and effective weapon against the repressive acts of the courts and the governor—and the scab operation of the mill.

The creation of independent political forms of organization, capable of encompassing much broader forces than the strikers alone, can negate the force of most of the company's efforts to continue operating and destroy resistance. The threat against the national union is minimized so long as the new forms are genuinely political, genuinely independent of the union structure per se. The threats of individual fines or imprisonment become meaningless against an organized, mass-supported defiance of unjust injunctions. Once the political status quo is broken, the demand that injunctions be changed to prohibit both picketing and scab operation of the mill until a labor dispute is resolved is fully in accord with the interests of public safety and public welfare, and can gain overwhelming force.

Many people, including some workers, believe that challenging labor injunctions simply means engaging in individual attacks against scabs. Therefore, it is important to sharply distinguish the tactics herein advocated from such actions. It is doubtful that individual threats or attacks against scabs were ever a good tactic.

The tactics for defying unjust laws and injunctions that we speak of here are the tactics of mass, peaceful, civil disobedience. These tactics are hardly new to labor struggles around the world, or in our own labor history. But true labor history—certainly the history of strikes—is not taught in our schools or colleges.

For an example of struggle in recent memory to guide them, to be a touchstone, workers preparing for a strike would do well to examine the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The tactics of mass civil disobedience advocated by Dr. King made it possible for African-American people—

as well as others—to unite, to mobilize their full force, to emancipate themselves, and to defeat entrenched, more powerful enemies. The tactics of Dr. King were focused on making the unjust system of segregation and discrimination inoperable, while giving the enemies of civil rights no pretext for the mass violence and terror that had repeatedly been used to retard the movement for equality for over 300 years.

The political organizations of the people had no money and were immune from lawsuits. The jails were not big enough to hold the movement. So the status quo was broken. The political organizations that come into being in strike struggles can outlast the strikes, and become new, powerful bases of political power for working people in the U.S.A. (The new town government in Jay is proof of this.) Therefore, they have a significance beyond helping determine the fate of strikes. In fact, without the formation of relatively permanent new forms of political organization at grass roots and community levels, it is difficult to foresee a solution to the national need for greater political independence and for labor's overall influence.

There are many and varied political tendencies among workers in any shop, but when they are united in their own organizations, class interests come to the fore, regardless of political opinions. Strikes are unique in providing an opportunity for the principles of self-organization and self-emancipation by workers to become the foundation of their effective participation in social life. Too often these principles are forgotten when it comes to politics. Where politics are left to "politicians" the class issues are blunted and usually hopelessly compromised.

In theory, the creation of such forms of organization in a key strike of major significance, such as the paperworkers' strike, need not be confined to the particular community, but can be applied to organize otherwise very difficult and innovative solidarity actions by workers and allies—such as general work stoppages, "workers holidays," "moments (or hours) of no work"—to bring dramatic pressure on state or national leaders. This concept is not as impossible as it may sound to some. At several points in the Jay strike, the desire by workers in many of the paper mills in Maine to do more than raise money for the strikers was very high. But the means and tools to do it were not available.

These are a few of the achievements of the IP strikers. Their struggle is not over. They remain committed to the goal of national bargaining, and to continue the corporate campaign against IP until all strikers are reinstated. They remain a potent force in the Maine labor movement, where the State Labor Council made extraordinary efforts to get employment for strikers. They remain a powerful voice in the UPIU, where they are committed to carrying on the struggle for the principles they have honored from the beginning.

There is no time to lose in advancing the various components necessary in preparing for the next round of struggle. The paper corporations show every sign that they are going to move with haste to consolidate the concessionary gains of the IP strike, and to nip the incipient drive for national bargaining in the bud. The struggle of the IP workers has shown, and continues to show, the path to victory. □

On the Bicentennial Of the U.S. Constitution *A Marxist View*

HERBERT APTHEKER

In 1913, Charles A. Beard's *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* gave precise expression and documentation to the view, advanced previously by historians as well as political leaders, that the Constitution at the moment of its framing was in essence the victory of ultraconservatism, reflecting contempt for democratic rights and devoted to the sanctification and protection of the rich minority. Eminently conservative historians, like John W. Burgess, went so far as to refer to the adoption of the Constitution as a coup d'état, while publicists of the schools of progressivism during the first decades of this century, like J. Allen Smith and Herbert Croly, held a similar view. Early socialist books—economic determinist rather than Marxist—did not differ basically on this point, as the writings of A. M. Simons, Gustavus Myers, and Allan Benson attest, the last named entitling his work *Our Dishonest Constitution* (1913).

In view of the near unanimity, it may well be asked why Beard's book caused so much furor, with President Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia University denouncing it as little short of obscene. The full answer does not lie in a *misreading* of the author's intent as denunciatory of the Constitution. What was new in Beard's work and what disturbed the conservatives and reactionaries was not his assessment of the Constitution as a victory for reaction but his demonstration that the document represented not eternal verities but the class needs of its framers. It was this exposure (partial and one-sided though it was) of the class nature of the law and the state—unquestionably, a contribution at that time to realistic, critical thinking about American history—that was obnoxious to reactionaries.

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Is it true that the Constitution was the product of counter-revolution?

We may begin by considering an argument often cited to uphold that view, namely the absence from the Constitutional Convention of such Revolutionary leaders as Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams, John Hancock and Thomas Paine, with the inference that they were in basic opposition to the Constitution. Like the conservative John Adams, at the time minister to Great Britain, Thomas Jefferson was away as minister to France; like Adams, he supported the document, albeit with serious reservations. John Hancock was the presiding officer in the Massachusetts Convention of 1788 that ratified the Constitution, with his support; and Samuel Adams was a member of that same convention, and he, too, approved ratification. Paine was abroad at the time, but he approved, like Jefferson, with reservations; as he wrote Washington in 1796: "I would have voted for it myself, had I been in America, or even for worse, rather than have none." It is true that these revolutionists would have preferred a founding document that gave fuller expression to the democratic rights of the people, and their reservations, therefore, were mainly concerned with the failure to include the Bill of Rights. But they did not oppose ratification of a Constitution they considered the most enlightened of the age.

Meanwhile, in Europe, promonarchical writers had been describing anarchy in the republican United States, and penmen dismissed the idea of republican unity for the United States as "the idlest and most visionary of notions." On the other hand, the Constitution and its ratification were hailed by "Scottish Burgh reformer, Irish patriot, British radical" as a "thorn in the flesh" of tyrants, monarchs, and their lackeys.

To treat as an ultraconservative triumph this document, hailed by radicals and revolutionists

in Europe, its ratification supported by Sam Adams, Hancock, Paine, and Jefferson, is, to say the least, paradoxical. It is, in effect, to misinterpret the Constitution, to view it mechanically, divorced from time and place. It is, today, to give the Constitution to reaction that now seeks to destroy it.

II The Constitution was framed as a bourgeois-democratic document for the governing of a republic that still retained precapitalist features, notably slavery. However, rather than a renunciation of the American Revolution, it represents a consolidation of the revolution by the classes that led it.

The very idea of a written constitution wherein the powers of government are enumerated is a logical consummation of that revolution. The theoretical essence of the constitutional democratic movement was, with Locke and against Hobbes, the inherent evil of government, of regulation, of control. The heart of liberty, in its bourgeois, antifeudal, connotation, is the absence of restraint; it is not the wherewithal to accomplish desired objectives. Therefore, where there is tyranny—in the eighteenth century this meant absolute monarchy—there would be and could be no written constitution, since enumerating the powers of the omnipotent is an impossible and useless task.

Liberty was defined in the only way

the bourgeoisie can define and understand it;

i.e., liberty to accumulate property

This is why to the archconservative of the epoch, Edmund Burke, a written constitution appeared hateful and seditious, *per se*, while to a Thomas Paine it was "to liberty, what a grammar is to language." For, to him, the presence of a written constitution connoted the opposite of tyranny, i.e., popular sovereignty, and therefore, he held, "a government without a constitution is power without right."

The feudal emphasis upon tenure and authority makes status the basic aim of society; the bourgeois emphasis upon fluidity, progress, and reason makes property the basic aim of society. Amongst the delegates at the Constitutional Convention there is almost unanimity on this

point. This property is to be secured by freedom—i.e., freedom from the old restraints, delimiting laws, regulatory provisions, and status-enshrined privileges. Property so secured and so freed will therefore be enhanced. Accumulation is the hallmark of freedom, and varied and unequal distribution of that accumulated property is the result, as it is the essence, of liberty. Madison, leading theoretician of the Constitution, repeatedly makes that point. Writing to Jefferson (October 24, 1787), he insisted that what he called "natural distinctions"—by which he meant property distinctions as contrasted with "artificial" ones based on religion or politics—"result from the very protection which a free Government gives to unequal faculties of acquiring it."

Liberty, then, was defined in the only way the bourgeoisie can define it and can understand it, i.e., liberty to accumulate property. Of course this liberty entails inequality and helps produce its own negation. Despite the limitations, this is a kind of freedom, compared to the system it supplanted, that is progressive and liberating. This property definition of liberty is made by an eighteenth-century bourgeoisie, young and virile, competitive and progressive. Its enunciation and incorporation in the Constitution do not violate the spirit of the Revolution, but rather make that document the logical expression of the Revolution. The enunciation by that bourgeoisie, at that time and place and under those circumstances, of the sacredness of property rights and the freedom to accumulate capital and to protect what comes into being, cannot be equated with verbally similar protestations of devotion to "free enterprise" by a late twentieth-century, monopolistic, thoroughly reactionary, historically obsolete capitalism.

Beard concludes his chapter evaluating the contents of the Constitution with these words: "It was an economic document drawn with superb skill by men whose property interests were immediately at stake, and as such it appealed directly and unerringly to identical interests in the country at large."

This statement is characteristic of the oversimplification that marks Beard's very influential view. The Constitution was not simply an economic document. It was a constitution—that is, a political document reflecting the new bourgeois order (in which, however, chattel slavery

existed). Of course, a considerable part of it dealt with the regulation of certain economic aspects of that order. Since it was a bourgeois order, it was drawn up by propertied men—in fact, only propertied *white* (overwhelmingly *Anglo-Saxon*) men, and this reflects the chauvinist and male supremacist nature of the bourgeois order, even in its youth.

But this does not make the document reactionary, for it must be seen in terms of its time and place. Nor does it make the document counterrevolutionary, for the economics expressed in the Constitution reflects the economics basic to the Revolution, and to the national economic tasks of the period. Of course, the Constitution appealed to planters, merchants, bankers, creditors, budding manufacturers, and their professional servitors, since these together ruled and without their approval the Constitution would neither have been drafted nor adopted. But, in the first place, the appeal was by no means confined to these individuals and was by no means unanimous among them, or equally great among them. And, in the second place, once again, these groups and classes are of the eighteenth century in a newly emancipated colony seeking national unification, not at the close of the twentieth century in an advanced imperialist country.

The goal of national unity, central to the bourgeois revolution of the time, is seen in the economic provisions of the Constitution itself, in terms of money, debts, tariffs, treaties, contracts, police power, and political centralization—creating a single and expandable national market upon which the bourgeoisie might feed, and in turn develop. All this, basic to the Constitution, is not sinister or vulgar or reactionary. On the contrary, it is the material fundament, in legal form, of a nascent bourgeois order.

II Was there, then, no general political trend in the United States shown by a comparison of the Declaration of Independence with the Constitution? Granted, one was a manifesto justifying revolution and the other was an instrument for the governing of a nation, and, therefore, the two documents are not strictly comparable. Still, do they not symbolize some drift, and is not this toward the right?

I think that question requires an affirmative answer, but not by characterizing one as a counterrevolutionary victory compared with the

other. The Declaration of Independence came at the high point of revolutionary struggle and bore the strong imprint of the left in the revolutionary coalition. The other is the legal embodiment and crystallization of the fundamental content of that revolution, particularly as seen by the well-to-do—national self-determination, the breaking of imperial fetters upon the development of the home market and the means of production and resources of the country, and the enhancement of the democratic and humanist content of life in the new country. It comes after the fighting, after the highpoint of enthusiasm, after the bourgeois elements find the nation independent and set out to reap, as fully as possible, the enormous benefits of that independence. The mass—and therefore left, democratic—component of the revolutionary coalition is less needed now than in 1776; and the sober second thoughts and exploitative drives of the bourgeoisie and the planters are coming to the fore. Now their ever-present fears of the masses are intensified—especially as those masses display continued militancy—and what they want is Law and Order, Stability and Calm.

Jefferson put the matter extremely well in a remarkably prophetic letter written in 1780, as the war was coming to a close: "It can never be too often repeated, that the time for fixing every essential right on a legal basis is while our rulers are honest, and ourselves united. From the conclusion of this war we shall be going down hill. It will not then be necessary to resort every moment to the people for support. They will be forgotten therefore and their rights disregarded."

The center and especially the right of the revolutionary coalition—men like the Morris and Hamilton—moved by these considerations and opportunities, sought the means whereby to combine the urge for stronger unity, which is very much broader than their own circles, with their special preoccupation with the dangers from the masses, from what they called agrarian, levelling, and anarchistic threats. They seized above all upon the debtor protest movement led by Captain Daniel Shays, perhaps even stimulated some of its excesses and, certainly, distorted its aims and grossly exaggerated the danger that it represented for the bourgeois order.

It is not, however, only these elements of the revolutionary coalition that are interested in the achievement of "a more perfect union." The

dream of a powerful, lasting, secure, and happy United States filled the minds of farmers and yeomen, mechanics and artisans, and they were dreams expressive of a more noble patriotism than the rich, in any period, can know. And there were dangers from the extreme right in American life—very serious dangers, which played as significant a role as did Shays' Rebellion in arousing a desire for "the hooping of the barrel's thirteen states," to quote the words Thomas Paine used in recalling his early desire for firm unity.

In the early 1780s the demand for closer federation was quite general. Leaders of the most varied political alignments and philosophies, from Washington to Madison to Mason to R.H. Lee, to Jefferson and Hancock, were promoting the idea. The multiplicity of tariffs, the trade wars, the varied currencies, the dumping by England, the sharply unfavorable balance of trade, the rise in the cost of finished products, the concomitant fall in the selling price of crops, and the disappearance of specie did not trouble only the merchant and planter; these hurt the hired farmhand, the seaman and the artisan. The contempt with which the United States was treated in the capitals of Europe and especially in London, the world's capital, provoked a national resentment and a desire for stronger unity among the people.

Above all, there was the most serious threat to the continued existence of the American Republic coming not from "levelers" and Shaysites, who represented no such threat at all, but from the Tories and their agents and sympathizers, from monarchists, from real reactionaries and true subversives, and from the rulers of Great Britain, who actively sought to dismember that republic whose very existence was an affront. Proposals and projects looking towards a monarch, a dictator, the splitting of the country into two, three, or more confederacies came from and were seriously considered by the highest figures in the army, in state government, and in the Continental Congress. The Constitutional Convention itself found it necessary to assure the public that "we never once thought of a king." The necessity for that assurance came not only from the reality of such dangers but also from the fierce opposition among the American masses to monarchy, to tyranny, to anything smacking of real counterrevolution.

III There was unanimity among the members of the Constitutional Convention regarding the fundamentals of their bourgeois order—the sacredness private property, the sanctity of contract, the inevitability of rich and poor, and their existence as reflecting immutable qualities of human society. Economic differences were confined to conflicts arising from different kinds of propertied interests—land, slaves, ships, banks. etc.—with the delegates agreeing that the most consequential difference was that between North and South, i.e., economics based on slave labor and (largely) free labor. These problems were subjected to ingenious compromises, the details of which have been described many times and need not detain us here.

But this was a bourgeois society at the beginning of its career, and the delegates were representatives of propertied groups that had just led a war of national liberation. Moreover, they were keenly aware of the freedom-loving masses who but recently, arms in hand, had done the fighting in that war and whose spirit of restiveness and independence they had frequently displayed—sometimes in dramatic form—since the war. Because of all these reasons, the propertied delegates themselves in drafting a constitution had to keep in mind the popular liberties so far as they were then comprehended. And the records of their convention are filled with such evidence—with explicit recognition of the fact that, unless this or that popular provision is included or this and that anti-democratic provision is omitted or modified, the people, that "iron flail" as Milton called them, would simply not tolerate the result. Certainly, most of them were looking for the absolute minimum, for no more than what they thought they had to give, making the mistake of omitting a Bill of Rights.

Concretely, in terms of the provisions of the original Constitution, how are these positive, progressive influences manifested?

The Constitution provides for complete separation of church and state, including the forbidding of any religious requirements or qualifications for both electors and elected—provisions in advance of anything then in existence either in Europe or in the state constitutions.

The Constitution forbids all titles of nobility or the acceptance of such titles if offered by other sovereignties—a provision of considerable conse-

quence in a still largely monarchical world with serious royalist tendencies in the United States. It forbids bills of attainder and *ex post facto* laws, both frequently employed devices of tyranny. It guarantees the writ of habeas corpus against suspension except in times of rebellion or critical emergency. It provides for jury trial in all criminal cases. It subordinates the military to the civil power and provides that no military appropriation is to be made for a period greater than two years. It provides for the popular election of the House of Representatives. It provides that only Congress shall declare a state of war.

Despite urgent arguments in its favor, the Constitution sets up no property qualification, either for the electors or for the legislators and other officeholders, quite unlike existing provisions in England, or in the states. It provides stated salaries for all officials; this was done quite consciously as a rejection of the common practice of making such service voluntary and thus possible only for the rich. Moreover, except in the case of the president, who must be native-born, no disability or penalty or invidious distinction of any kind is indicated as between native and naturalized citizens, although again heated demands were made in favor of such nationalistic proposals.

The Constitution's definition of treason is strict and, as a safeguard against tyrannical persecution, was far in advance of any other government of its time. Strong opposition was voiced by such members as Gouverneur Morris of New York and John Rutledge of South Carolina to this provision and they sought alterations that would broaden its definition and make conviction easier. But the Constitution defines treason only as levying war against the United States or adhering to its enemies, the latter clause made more precise and restrictive by defining it as "giving aid or comfort." And treason is not to be construed, nor is it to consist in ideas or words, for its proof requires two eyewitnesses "to the same overt act." The last words were added particularly at the urging of Benjamin Franklin, who said he "wished this amendment to take place. Prosecutions for treason were generally virulent; and perjury too easily made use of against innocence."

Provision for the admission of new states, with those states to be equal in all respects with the original ones, was also won only over strong

opposition, especially from eastern members.

The limited and stated terms of office for all officials—with the notable exception of judges—was a blow to the monarchical and aristocratic factions.

The possibility of amending the Constitution is also among its most farsighted provisions. While the process of amendment is very cumbersome, some process is present. This is reflective of the principle of popular sovereignty and of the idea—repeatedly stressed by Jefferson—that only the living should bind the living and that provisions for change and improvement must exist in any popular organic law.

The whole republican framework of the Constitution was a blow to the friends of absolutism. Contrary to those who see in the idea of a republic something contrasting with or opposed to democracy, a republic was conceived of in the Constitution as the device necessary in a large and populous country where what Madison called "pure democracy" (i.e., direct, personal participation by every citizen) was impossible, in order to make possible and effective the majority's will. This not only included the sovereignty of the people but also included the idea that necessarily flows from that sovereignty—i.e., the right to alter, change or abolish—to revolutionize—the form of government.

This point, found in the writings of Jefferson, Madison and many of their leading contemporaries (including Hamilton), is stated with particular clarity by James Wilson, a delegate from Pennsylvania to the Convention and later an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court: "A revolution principle certainly is, and certainly should be taught as a principle of the U.S. and of every State in the Union. This revolution principle that the sovereign power residing in the people, they may change their constitution of government whenever they please, is not a principle of discord, rancor or war; it is a principle of melioration, contentment, and peace."

IV The Constitution *guaranteed* a republican form of government to every state and this, at a time when separation and monarchical ideas and plots were widespread, was momentous. *That is, no other form of government was permitted.*

Of course, in saying the Constitution was bourgeois-democratic we have indicated not only

its positive features but also its severely limited nature. The "democracy" of the bourgeoisie, since it is the democracy of an exploiting, oppressing class, is inevitably limited and hesitant. And the "democracy" of this bourgeois-democratic republic at its founding was severely limited in a most consequential additional sense—within it, held in chattel slavery, were about 750,000 people, or a full 20 percent of the total population, as well as about 200,000 indentured servants. Characteristic, too, of such a society was the complete political enslavement of that half of the "free" population made up of women. The Native American peoples were ignored.

The most consequential opposition

came from the masses, who feared

the document was not sufficiently democratic

The disabilities of the women, while commented upon by some amongst them, went completely unnoticed by the Founding Fathers and are present, in the Constitution, as natural and assumed. The disabilities of unfree, indentured servants, and slaves, while frequently in the minds of the Fathers—as employers and slave-owners facing the far from passive dispossessed—nowhere are remedied in the Constitution. On the contrary, the document assumes their existence, provides for their policing and contains some severe "compromises" relative to apportionment, to the slave trade, and to the return of fugitive slaves—though, be it noted, the word "slave" was deliberately omitted.

The central limitation of the Constitution is organic to a bourgeois document, i.e., it labors to safeguard an exploitative economic order. It is the contradiction between the interests of the owners and of the laboring masses that is the central difficulty, though it is rarely explicitly mentioned.

Madison, however, touches it when he poses the problem that faces the exploiters in a republican society where the will of the majority (the exploited) is supposed to be sovereign. It is to get around this that the complex and extensive federal system is hailed by him and made basic to the structure of the new government. The Fathers see the multiplicity of local and state governments as so many restraining walls before the

"hasty," "unthinking" masses. They see the complex processes of electing senators and the president, the permanent tenure of the judges, the great powers of the judiciary, the veto power of the president, the extremely complex process of amendment, as invaluable bulwarks between their property interests and the democratic process.

They wanted politics to be confined to struggles among varied propertied groups, not between the propertied and the propertyless, and they created a federal constitution to mirror this aim, in order to obscure fundamental class antagonisms and to give the appearance of a balance wheel—impartial, accurate, and just. At the same time that the political grants made to the people serve as important mediums for struggle, they also serve to deflect the target of the struggle into channels picked by the political representatives of the propertied groups.

As previously indicated, various elements on the right, for their own really reactionary reasons, opposed the Constitution. This is a story neglected in the literature, but time forbids its full telling here. The most consequential opposition, however, came from the masses, who feared the document was not sufficiently democratic, and therefore demanded the inclusion of a Bill of Rights, specifically to guarantee as inviolable the freedoms most important to the people—freedom of speech, press, and assembly, religious liberty, trial by jury, protection against unreasonable searches and seizures and other provisions against persecution, such as the right not to bear witness against oneself.

This struggle, led by Mason, Henry, Lamb of New York, Sam Adams, and Jefferson, was organized and, for fear of reactionary duplicity and persecution, even conducted secretly, with codes and intermediate addresses.

The extent of the mass pressure will be indicated when it is noted that Massachusetts, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, and New York, in ratifying the Constitution, simultaneously urged in the strongest possible terms that a Bill of Rights be added, which (to quote the New Hampshire document) "would remove the fears and quiet the apprehensions of many of the good people of this State." North Carolina, in announcing its decision neither to reject nor ratify the Constitution, said that it wanted a Bill of Rights passed by Congress "previous to Ratifica-

tion," and when Congress passed the Bill of Rights, in September 1789, North Carolina ratified in November.

The Congress, in passing the first ten amendments (under the leadership of Madison) specifically declared that, since the demand for them was so general "and as extending the ground of public confidence in the Government, will best ensure the beneficent ends of its institution," therefore they were submitted to the states for adoption. Finally, Rhode Island, ratifying in May 1790, referring to the Bill of Rights, remarked that the rights enumerated therein "cannot be abridged or violated," and found that they "are consistent with the said Constitution" and so announced its ratification.

The Bill of Rights is, indeed, "consistent with the Constitution," in the sense that it extends and specifies the democratic rights only partially or inadequately expressed in that document.

V The evidence establishes, I think, that the Constitution of the United States represents a consolidation, not a repudiation, of the American Revolution. While, on balance, it does represent a rightward trend from the highpoint of the Revolution, it nevertheless comprises the essence of that Revolution—national independence and unity, the unfettering of the nascent U.S. bourgeoisie, the renunciation of tyrannical and monarchical government, the political sovereignty of the people, the establishment of republican rule as the form *par excellence* of bourgeois democracy. In its most glaring failing—the recognition, though camouflaged, of chattel slavery—it reflects the greatest failing of the Revolution—the maintenance of that slavery.

Taking it overall and viewing it historically—that is, in relation to its time and place—the author of the Declaration of Independence was correct when he said of the Constitution that it "is unquestionably the wisest ever presented to man"—and that was his opinion even before the Bill of Rights had been added. Certainly with those ten amendments, which were and are of the essence of the Constitution, the Constitution was what Jefferson said it was. Madison, let it be added, thought of the First Amendment as absolute and subject to no exceptions whatsoever. "A supposed freedom," he wrote, "which admits of exceptions, alleged to be licentious, is not

freedom at all."

The Constitution is one of the great milestones in the forward march of humanity. Indeed, the U.S. ruling class today, seeking to turn back that march, is driven to undermine and to violate the American Constitution. It is for those who resist war and reaction to defend that Constitution in the process of defending peace and freedom in the best interests of the people of the United States.

There is then good reason *for us* to celebrate the bicentennial of the Constitution. That document, when created, was the most advanced charter of government in the world,

The Constitution's Preamble—which is of course, an integral part of the document as a whole—affirmed the revolutionary theory of popular sovereignty, as opposed to inherited sovereignty; that was something new and startling for the world of the eighteenth century. No wonder European states made possession of a copy of the U.S. Constitution a criminal offense, well into the nineteenth century!

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With all its positive features, including the popularly demanded Bill of Rights, the Constitution, however, *was* an eighteenth-century document, drafted and confirmed by states dominated by private-property owners, including especially slaveowners. The result was not only the document's main weakness—recognizing slavery (albeit ashamed to use the word); it also meant limiting the concept of freedom—for others—to *political* only and, even there, very incompletely, especially as concerns the Native American peoples, people without significant property ownership, and all women.

Recognizing the positive features of the Constitution, *for its time*, and underlining the limitations of the document, *even for its time*, it is necessary also to insist, in tune with the forward-looking essence of the Constitution, that the twentieth century and the twenty-first that looms just over the horizon demand a very great extension of the concept of freedom. This must mean now, in the first place, the full consideration of

ll the people, including the vast majority of the eople, that is to say, all women, all minorities, nd working people as a whole.

This must mean also the expansion of the efnition of freedom, which to the bourgeoisie as concerned only with matters political and ven there meant freedom *from*, not freedom *to*, eant what government might *not* do, and not hat government *could* do and *must* do to make fe really full and decent and creative for the enre population. This means, specifically in our ay, the expansion of the concept of freedom so at it includes all the traditional freedoms—so obly described in our Bill of Rights—but also ncludes basic socioeconomic rights: the right to a fe of sufficient economic and material require- nents and a life free of indignities and insults. eedom is a mockery when it is freedom to be ungry, to be unemployed, to be illiterate, to be l-housed, to live in fear of illness, to live in fear f insecurity when elderly, to live with the bur- len of others being “free” to hurl racial and na- tional and religious insults and to practice racist r chauvinist acts. Such “freedom” always was njust, but in this day and age, with its knowl- dge, its capacities, its experiences, to permit uch conditions to exist is not to be an adherent f freedom but rather to be a sustainer of inhu- nanity and atrocious cruelty.

Our Constitution includes the right of revo- lution; our Constitution is itself a capstone of rev- olution. The amending process of our Constitu- tion endured through the Second American Rev- olution, highlighted by the 13th and 14th Am- endments, which in the first place abolished without compensation billions of dollars worth of

previously recognized private property, and, which secondly sustained such confiscation— without due process, by the way—in that provi- sion of the 14th Amendment which refused to hear suits by former slaveowners—including those who had been loyal to the Union—seeking compensation for property in slaves taken from them.

If our Constitution made possible through amendment the abolition of property in slaves because it was found to be anachronistic, socially harmful and economically regressive, might it not be possible for later generations to come to similar conclusions about other property held in private ownership for reasons of individual enrichment? If such generations do come to such conclusions, they might act with regard to such property as our ancestors did with regard to property in slaves. Let us hope that if that comes to pass it may reach implementation with less bloodshed than was required to put the 13th Amendment into our Constitution!

Indeed, let us not only hope for such a goal; let us so *act* today on the social, economic, politi- cal—and individual—fronts as to hasten the mo- ment when sovereignty includes control over the resources of this country. That being achieved, it will be possible to eliminate such abominations as poverty, unemployment, indecent housing, inadequate health care, racism, and male su- premacy. This accomplished, humanity will have confined warmaking to museum exhibits. With that, the prehuman stage of history will be tran- scended and men and women—fully equal men and women—fully free women and men—will create a heaven on earth. □

A Socialist Class Position and Humanity's Interests— Peaceful Coexistence Today

HERMANN AXEN

OUR SOCIALIST CLASS POSITION FULLY COR- responds with humankind's interest in safeguarding peace and settling other global problems. With this statement,¹ made at the 7th session of the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) Central Committee, Erich Honecker has drawn our attention to a theoretical and practical issue that has far-reaching implications and is of great relevance.

It has been proved in theory and practice that the working class, that socialism, feels deeply committed to peace and peaceful work. This is due to the proletariat's class nature, to the social content of the new social system which is a result of the power wielded by the working class. It is a social system in which no class and no strata is interested in war, in which no one draws profit from the arms race. Socialism is a new society, as was formulated by Karl Marx, where peace will reign because international rule will be by labor liberated from exploitation.²

The Great October Socialist Revolution which V.I. Lenin described as "the first victory of the proletariat" and thus as "the first victory in the struggle to abolish war,"³ for the first time provided a state basis for the historic mission of the working class, which objectively entails the liberation of all humankind from exploitation and war. When it came into being, socialism immediately made peace its supreme objective with Lenin's Decree on Peace the credo of an active socialist foreign policy.

Lenin's principled concept of the policy of peaceful coexistence established the main line of socialist foreign policy, the democratization of international relations in the spirit of peace, security, equality and cooperation. As is known, the struggle for the implementation of the policy of

peaceful coexistence among states with different social systems is a strategic task which will remain on the agenda as long as socialism and capitalism exist side by side.

The CPSU and the Soviet Union have strictly adhered to the principle of peaceful coexistence in foreign policy—in Genoa and Rapallo, in the League of Nations, in the alliance against Hitler. Lenin's teachings were developed steadily, in line with the actual course of the international class controversy. Whereas, after Red October, the struggle to implement peaceful coexistence among states with different social systems was initially aimed at winning breathing space for the revolution after the bloody imperialist intervention, it grew into a struggle to quash militarism and war, to rule out violence in international relations between nations and states. The concept of peaceful coexistence has never been a tactical question. In November 1920, after the Red Army's victory over Wrangel, after having concluded provisional peace with Poland, Lenin said unambiguously that we . . .

have not only won a breathing space but something much more significant. A breathing space, we understand, is a brief period during which the imperialist powers have had many opportunities to renew the war against us in greater force. . . . However, if we cast a glance at the conditions in which we defeated all attempts made by the Russian counter-revolutionaries and achieved a formal peace with all the Western states, it will be clear that we have something more than a breathing space: we have entered a new period, in which we have won the right to our fundamental international existence in the network of capitalist states.⁴

In the course of the emergence of the world socialist system, socialism has made use of its growing power and influence in its own class interest and thus, in the interest of all humankind,

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to make it clear to the aggressive circles of imperialism that the use of military force against socialism will finally result in its own destruction.

The fact that the Soviet Union confronted the comprehensive strategic invulnerability of the United States and won military-strategic parity through immense achievements and at great sacrifice, the effects of which are still apparent today, was a decisive factor in the failure of the nuclear blackmail and gunboat policy pursued by imperialist circles. Alongside the growth in political, economic, scientific and technological potential on the part of the socialist countries, their consistent peace policy, the selfless struggle of the communist and workers' parties, the upswing in the national liberation movement and struggle, and the increasingly powerful peace movement, this has been one of the crucial factors preventing imperialism from unleashing a new world war.

IN OUR TIME, new factors have gained paramount importance. These are the new conditions prevailing in the nuclear and space age, the consequence of the productive forces' revolutionary development. The new aspects of the progress of human civilization resulting from the scientific and technological revolution are able to unfold only to a limited extent in our time because of the hegemonic, militarist wing of international monopoly capital has misused, and still misuses, the revolutionary advance of the productive forces to develop ever new, more horrible systems of mass destruction. This proves, in a new impressive way, that the system of man's exploitation by man has become a system threatening man's extinction by man.

These facts make it imperative for socialism to exert extraordinary efforts to ensure national defence, so these funds are not available for the peaceful building of a new social system. At the same time, this development increasingly undermines the capital reproduction process in the United States and other imperialist countries. Arms development has created a tremendous potential for the destruction of humankind and our planet, in the face of which a nuclear war can neither be waged nor won. The acute danger of proliferation of chemical and nuclear weapons of mass destruction and the emergence of nuclear terrorism forces even the powers that be in impe-

rialist countries to give these matters a second thought.

Under these circumstances, the peaceful coexistence of socialist and capitalist countries is no longer one of several possibilities of coexistence among countries. It has become the only possible way of coexistence, giving the struggle for it a new dimension.

Socialism takes up the new challenges, in the same way as the international communist and workingclass movement, because socialism has been committed to peaceful coexistence, fervently advocating it from the very beginning.

Erich Honecker characterized the new situation as follows, at the International Theoretical Conference on Karl Marx held in 1983:

The maintenance of world peace is a matter that concerns everybody, including those who do not aspire to bring about fundamental social change. Certainly, nobody has ever had a monopoly on the desire for peace and the willingness to strive for it. Ever since there have been wars, with all their suffering, sacrifice and destruction, the best representatives of the peoples and various classes and organizations have bravely resisted aggressive threats. But never before has the human race been confronted by such a lethal danger as today, never was it so pressed to struggle for peace. Nuclear world war would even turn the idea of making profit into an illusion. And thus, a historic opportunity is born for the most diverse forces to draw together in the struggle for peace and for this struggle to grow broader than it ever was in the past.⁵

The idea of a worldwide coalition of common sense and realism projected by Comrade Erich Honecker at the 7th Session of the SED Central Committee in November 1983 has become a new, important factor in world politics. The successes achieved by the GDR and the other socialist countries in their policy of dialogue, the approval of a security partnership with the SPD (Socialist Party of Germany) and other parties in the Socialist International, as well as broad bourgeois liberal forces, the new upsurge of the worldwide peace movement, the actions of the nonaligned countries, the initiatives launched by the six heads of state, and government from four continents have contributed towards this end.

The International Meeting for Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, held in Berlin in June 1988, the biggest world forum of the forces of peace in

history, provided convincing proof of the dynamism and vitality of the worldwide coalition of common sense and realism.

But leading representatives of imperialism continue to balk at the policy of peaceful coexistence. At the 4th Summit in Moscow, the American administration was more willing to destroy its medium-range missiles (already neutralized by our military counter-measures) than to acknowledge in the signed Soviet-American Statement, that the principles of peaceful coexistence and non-interference are valid norms under international law for relations between socialism and capitalism.

The response to the proposal by Comrade Gorbachev of Jan. 15, 1986 on the elimination of all nuclear weapons by the year 2000, the results achieved so far by our socialist peace policy, the growth of the worldwide coalition of common sense, however, testify to the increased historical possibility of bringing imperialism round to realize on a long-term basis and, finally, forever, that it is inadmissible to continue to put its aggressive interests above the interest of all humankind in peace, a secure existence, prosperity and health. Its only chance for survival, the social system's chance for existence are in peaceful coexistence, peaceful competition and co-operation. This is the crux of the matter.

In the final analysis, the objective requirements of the nuclear and space age in general and the abuse of the productive forces under imperialism in particular have confronted all humankind with problems which they can solve only cooperatively. First and foremost, it is essential to prevent a nuclear war. This is the highest priority. At the same time, it is vital to preserve the natural environment, to master the colossal ecological problems, to overcome hunger, underdevelopment, disease, and the plunder, debts and inequality of countries in the course of the stormy internationalization of productive forces and the resulting growing interdependence. These vital issues for the survival of humankind, of civilization, can only be settled by all countries and, hence, both systems, cooperating and reconciling their interests fairly. This means completely new dimensions in the cooperation among the different states of the international community.

The solution of these global problems in the interest of humans and their natural environ-

ment requires a truly new way of thinking, a new approach to questions of international cooperation among states, systems and the international community. This is what we set our sights on at our 11th Party Congress:

What is needed is a genuine resolve not to persist in stereotypes of confrontation and the striving for military superiority but to approach matters in a new way and to find new forms and procedures for dealing between different social systems, states and regions.⁶

To this end, Comrade Mikhail Gorbachev submitted new far-reaching proposals and suggestions in his speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 7, 1988. Cooperation was proposed while the two antagonistically opposed social systems continue to coexist. The new historical situation demands that both world systems carry out their struggle and competition without having recourse to military means, in compliance with the norms of peaceful coexistence.

By nature, the capitalist system is unable to master global problems on its own. The nature of the socialist order of society enables it to do so. But as things stand now, socialism, left to its own devices, does not have the strength to do away with global threats.

This is to say, global problems must be solved jointly. But one must not overlook the following facts in the process. There is an organic link between imperialism and the emergence and aggravation of the above problems. The threats to humankind have been caused by imperialism, especially by its military-industrial complex. If the global problems are to be solved, it is imperative to gradually compel the most aggressive imperialist forces, through resolute struggle, to renounce the use of military force and the arms race, and to accept a comprehensive stable system of international security. On their own initiative, these circles will not be capable of such new thinking and acting. This necessitates resolute struggle, the worldwide cooperation of all peace-loving people with a view to bringing their influence to bear on the most aggressive militarist circles of monopoly capital, driving them back and, ultimately, neutralizing them.

The emergence of overall human interests and concerns in no way does away with class interests. Overall human interests, which go beyond class barriers and arise from the fact that

the world is indivisible, will never occur in their pure form, just as they can never be satisfied aside from class interests.

Objectively, there is no way of looking after overall human interests that is not class-related. As long as there are classes, the overall human interests or—as Lenin put it—the interests of social development as a whole, are reflected and looked after by classes. Whether implemented or hampered, advanced or contorted, they are made norms for society as a whole. Until the time when a classless society exists, classes and the prevalent social systems will remain decisive in influencing social development as a whole.

Survival is also within the class interests of the monopoly bourgeoisie. It wants to continue to exist as a class. The working class too wants to survive. But this does not mean that antagonistic specific class interests resulting from the relevant class positions are abolished. Interest in survival means that each class depends on averting a nuclear holocaust, on preserving peace and on other conditions that are necessary for the existence of society, hence, on overall social conditions.

But the two main classes of modern society, even though sharing this interest in survival, differ on the scope of and the conclusions to be drawn from it. The capitalist does not want to survive only as a member of the human species, but as a capitalist. Capital exists to make a profit. But if capital wants to make a profit, it has to exist and, in order to secure its existence in the nuclear and space age, it has to bridle its urge for military aggression. And, the economic and social development in the United States and other capitalist countries compels them to do this.

Leading circles in the United States have to take account of the fact that an unbridled arms race exceeds the economic and financial potential even of the most powerful imperialist country. The United States is no longer in a position to build, without limit, all types of weapons. The explosion in military spending undermines the reproduction process of the U.S. economy, worsens its position *vis-à-vis* Japan and the European Community, and wrecks the world capitalist market and international financial and monetary relations. The capitalist world's major creditor has become its major debtor.

The tendency towards aggression is inherent in the imperialist system. Yet the realities of the

nuclear age, of the international political and military balance of forces, as well as economic trends, call a halt to this tendency, making it imperative for imperialism to keep peace.

BY CONTRAST, such a conflict of interests on economic and social grounds is alien to the working class. On the contrary, the better overall social affairs, the better the prospects for attaining the objectives and meeting the interests of the revolutionary class. Its class interests are in full agreement with humankind's interest in preserving peace and settling other global issues.

Another conclusion is: In the past, the Communist and workers' parties looked at peaceful coexistence simply as a specific form of class struggle. Since its emergence, the international workingclass movement has adopted a principled stand on peace as a socialist ideal but also as the most favorable form of struggle for national and social liberation.

However, should imperialism impose on the world's peoples a war against their will, against their resistance, it would be imperative to convert that war as fast as possible into a revolutionary overthrow of the belligerent class, thus achieving the speediest end to the war—peace. This concept, which was correct in the past and proven right by the results of two world wars, has been superseded by the objective new conditions of the struggle in the nuclear age and the scientific and technological revolution.

Today, it is more a matter of struggling to avert a nuclear inferno, to safeguard peace, to create free and decent living conditions throughout the world—a general democratic and humane task—which complies with the highest class interests of the international working class and corresponds with the essence and politics of socialism.

The fulfillment of this task is now an elementary condition, it is the necessary, the shortest—in historical terms—the only way toward achieving the final goal of the international workingclass and liberation movement, that is the ultimate, loftiest goal of human civilization.

Any step along the road toward social progress, strengthening and further developing socialism, national and social liberation, defending and broadening democracy in the capitalist countries, presupposes the prevention of nuclear war. Hence, peace as the loftiest of global human in-

terests has a deep social content, a class content.

By pointing out the way and objectives to all other social forces and systems in the struggle to settle the global issues facing mankind, especially to prevent a nuclear inferno, socialism today does not only prove to be an alternative to capitalism but the savior of human civilization in general. Bearing this in mind, the connection between the revolution in science and technology and the revolution in society becomes obvious.

Socialism, being the new social order that thrives on peace, that creates and preserves peace, has not only made the decisive contribution toward forcing imperialism to observe the longest period of peace in this century. Socialism today is proving, by submitting proposals on a comprehensive system of international security and cooperation, to be the system that points the way for the whole of mankind to jointly resolve the burning global issues, and thus to survival and to new horizons.

Clarity on the relationship between class struggle and the struggle for peace, and class and humankind's interests has become the clue to the further advance of the various progressive forces acting under various conditions. Looking at this issue in a narrow dogmatic way could lead to potential partners in the struggle for peace, security and prosperity for all people being overlooked or even put off, falling victim to the demagogic insinuations and practices of the most aggressive forces of imperialism. The overwhelming majority of humankind who understand that there is no sensible alternative to peaceful coexistence in the nuclear age, now covers several, even antagonistic, classes of society; the range goes from the working class to circles of monopoly capital.

That is why Comrade Erich Honecker outlined at the 7th session of the Central Committee:

We are far from reducing international relations to a simplified "class struggle stereotype." We do know, however, and find new proof of this every day, that the struggle between classes and the conflict of their interests continue to be the chief driving forces behind world affairs.⁷

A lack of principles, the abandonment of the socialist class position would not only do enormous harm to the interests of the working class, but also to the interests of humanity as a whole. This would enable the aggressive forces of imperialism to continue their policies endangering all humankind.

The struggle and the competition between the two social systems, naturally, is always a real conflict between ideologies that does not wane in any way. But the ideological struggle should not, and must not, be transferred to the relations among nations because this would make impossible any cooperation among states with different social systems and the settlement of common problems.

We will wage a consistent struggle to implement the policy of peaceful coexistence from a socialist class position. As was emphasized at the session of the SED Central Committee, we are called upon to develop, in even greater detail and more comprehensively, the dialectics of internal and external conditions underlying the development of socialist society, the necessities and effects of the class struggle and competition between the opposing systems, as well as the new prospects for international cooperation. □

Notes

1. See, Erich Honecker, "Heading for the 12th Party Congress," *Report of the Politburo to the 7th Session of the SED Central Committee*, Berlin, 1988.
2. Karl Marx, "First Address on the Franco-Prussian War," *Karl Marx/Frederick Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 22, International Publishers, New York, 7.
3. V.I. Lenin, "Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution," *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1966, 56.
4. V.I. Lenin, "Our Foreign and Domestic Position and the Tasks of Our Party," *op. cit.*, Vol. 31, 412.
5. Erich Honecker, "Karl Marx and Our Time: The Struggle for Peace and Social Progress," International Theoretical Conference of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany [SED], April, 1983, Verlag Zeit Im Bild, Dresden, 22.
6. Erich Honecker, "Report of the Central Committee of the SED to the 11th Congress of the SED," Verlag Zeit Im Bild, Dresden, 1986, 11.
7. See, Note 1.

Class Conscious Forces, Economic Struggles and Conditions Among African Americans

FRANKLIN ALEXANDER

THE CURRENT DISCUSSION AND DEBATE AMONG Communists and left forces on whether or not to place major emphasis on work inside the Democratic Party is producing argumentation that erects an artificial wall between economic struggles on the one hand, and other democratic questions, including the struggle for attaining full, legal, political, social and economic equality for African Americans, on the other.

These arguments muster substantial quotations, including some from V.I. Lenin, to convince us that class-conscious forces have understood their role in economic struggles—the fight of workers to win a particular grievance, strike or contract issue—but they have misunderstood their role in democratic struggles. The reason advanced for this misunderstanding is the all-class nature of many non-economic struggles.

Timothy V Johnson, in his article, "Democratic Demands and Class Conscious Forces," (*Political Affairs*, February 1989) argues that "Often what is only seen (by the left) are the economic questions. And it is thought that these are the 'real questions' affecting workers." He argues further, "Yet the left has no program for the solution to crime or the drug problem. But the issues, which are not economic questions are rarely addressed at all."

This line of thinking is not helpful, given the lack of organized movement and struggle on economic issues, especially as they impact the African-American community. It is precisely the economic questions—especially a struggle and movement for jobs-or-income—on which many progressives and left activists do not have a handle.

In the first years of the Reagan Administration, Communists together with others, correctly

advanced and acted on concrete programs and plans on economic issues, ranging from utility shut-offs to a legislative campaign for jobs-or-income. In Los Angeles, California, two of the most active centers, organized around such issues, were located in and found support in the predominantly African-American southside and predominantly Mexican-American eastside of the city.

This writer was active in those struggles and is witness to the fact that many of the same unemployed workers who were organized in unemployed councils (people who learned to fight and win battles against utility companies) are now among the millions of homeless. Within a couple of years, these broadly defined economic struggles decreased to the present standstill. The economic "recovery" of the middle Reagan years left millions of workers, and especially Black workers, skilled and unskilled out, in the cold.

The People's Daily World correspondent, Pat Fry, tells their story in her in-depth report on the "Vanishing Black Auto Worker."

David Cheeves, a Black autoworker, spent 12 years building cars for GM, first at the Fleetwood plant and then transferring to GM's new Cadillac plant in Detroit. He has been laid off for the last two years along with the entire second shift. He says prospects of finding a new job in Detroit are dismal. "There has been a general trend not only to move jobs out of the city," said Cheeves, "but to bar new job prospects for Black workers."

It's not what you know, it's who you know. "I hear a lot from white friends that they got jobs because they have an uncle or a friend of the family that got them in. If I had uncles, grandfathers and great grandfathers that had jobs in the skilled trades in a viable job market, I would have a better opportunity. (*PDW*, February 2, 1989)

The statistics bear out Cheeve's point. Black

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unemployment in Michigan remained an average 2.5 times that of whites in the state between 1971 and 1986, peaking in 1985 at 3.75 times that of whites, according to the Urban League's 1988 State of Black Michigan study. The statistics illustrate the impact of such massive joblessness.

Black people die at a younger age, are imprisoned and live in poverty in numbers enormously exceeding their proportion of the population.

At the same time, the standard of living of all workers has experienced a 14-year decline. The struggle for freedom and equality for African Americans is, by definition, an all-class movement. However, the consequences of growing joblessness upon a whole people, their neighborhoods, their institutions and possible generations to come, requires a many-sided approach to solutions.

Not the least of these are economic demands and movements led by workers—and Black workers in the first place. Re-establishing such centers of struggle as mentioned above requires that leadership be provided by those workers, employed and unemployed, whose experiences on the docks, in the warehouses and factories, in the mills, on the assembly lines and in their unions are indispensable—especially to a generation of working-class youth who have been denied even entry-level positions in the new and old industries that consciously locate outside of major urban centers.

This approach incorporates the basic content and dynamics of industrial concentration as a time-tested policy of effective Communist initiative and activity among the working class in the U.S.A. Such an approach heeds the advice of Comrade Henry Winston to concentrate on the workers and their families—where they work and where they live. In another time and under different conditions and, necessarily under different leadership, the African-American people galvanized around themselves a powerful movement that forced down barriers to formal, legal, political and social equality.

Today, the stranglehold of the military-industrial complex on all the conditions of life in the U.S.A. requires that all people's movements raise the ante on their demands for immediate and sustained cuts in the military budget. Any headway in this battle turns on forging all-sided, broad and democratic, multi-racial and anti-racist

organization and movement aimed at state monopoly capitalism. Again, not the least important are African Americans themselves, fighting directly against their deteriorating economic conditions.

Henry Winston's admonition that an entire generation of African-American youth is in danger of becoming "social pariahs" cannot be cited as a call to place more emphasis on "democratic" issues and struggles, counterposed to economic struggle and movement.

Non-workingclass forces among Black people are also genuinely seeking answers. Alarming statistics on the mortality rate of African-American men result in headlines declaring that "Black Males Are an Endangered Species." Despair begets muddled thinking and a conclusion that the solution is for those who "have made it" to provide more "self-help" programs and that we should place more emphasis on our African heritage.

Tim Johnson makes the point that "among African Americans there is a small petit-bourgeois and bourgeois sector who play a role that is bigger than their numbers." But is this a convincing argument for emphasizing "democratic" struggles and neglecting economic ones? Some among African Americans reach different conclusions and point to the not-to-be-underestimated 1988 election campaign of Rev. Jesse Jackson and the election of Ron Brown to chair the national Democratic Party as conclusive that progress has been made. These are not unimportant or even minimal developments and accomplishments.

James Steele was correct when he commented in summing up the Jackson campaign, "[Jackson] was the most consistent of all candidates in reflecting the interests of the working class and the people. Jackson took his campaign to plant gates and union halls, to the grassroots neighborhoods of the urban centers, to family farmers facing foreclosure, to peace demonstrations . . . The response this generated is the real story of the 1988 elections."

From this, Tim Johnson argues, "The left has long concluded that the Democratic Party cannot be transformed into a people's party." Johnson takes exception and answers, "It makes no difference whether the Democratic Party can be reformed . . . the point is the democratic struggles within that party and the forces who are involved in that struggle."

Johnson continues by giving a cursory nod to the "importance of independent campaigns in building the progressive movement and expanding democracy." All the aforementioned forces arrayed around the Jackson campaign and the Rainbow Coalition must now go forward in struggle and generate "street heat."

The Communist Party has expanded its participation and contribution on the electoral front including the running of candidates at the local level. A small party, learning the art of industrial concentration, that is part of a broader, left must object to any conclusion by class-conscious forces that only, or mostly, Democratic Party electoral struggles are the path to solutions (especially solutions affecting the worst-off and the most oppressed section of the working class).

This is especially so when such a path bypasses the critical and sometimes pivotal role of class-struggle actions, movements and leadership, and can result only in "swimming in currents" that leave an entire section of the working class huddled on the beach and out in the cold. Finding and linking the self-interests of the various sectors of the people is a key task for class-conscious forces. This will be critical in the struggles ahead for low- and moderate-income housing (including housing for the unemployed and homeless); guaranteed health care; free, quality and anti-racist education, etc.

However, some in the search for solutions speak only or mostly to the need to find the "self-interest" of all the people in the struggle against racism and for equality. Such an approach presumes that the condition of Black Americans, bearing the weight of monopoly's oppression,

can wait for solutions. Such an approach is too narrow and short-sighted. It is primarily a tactical approach lacking the strategic, not to mention, moral strength and fiber capable of forging a sustained, united movement whether against racism, racist violence or for affirmative action.

Again, such argumentation has the effect of detaching and letting drift a section of the working class from its rightful place in the all-out battles required to curb monopoly capitalism and to begin to redirect funds from the military to the needs of the people.

The left is not immune to the infectious ideological rot spewed by monopoly capitalism that relegates a whole section of African Americans to a permanent "underclass." It is in connection with all-sided struggle, and most importantly, class-struggle approaches among the most oppressed, inside of the nation's African-American communities, that the militant legacy and traditions of Black youth can be called upon and used to rally against crime and the scourge of drugs.

That tradition and legacy was evident when four African-American students sat down at a lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina on February 1, 1960 and helped to catapult the nation out of the icy grip of McCarthyism. Communists, and Black Communists in the first place, have a special role to play in this period. To borrow a footnote from history Frederick Douglass said, "He who would be free must strike the first blow." And further, "Without struggle there is no progress." Today, under different circumstances, we must add, "Without class struggle, there is no progress." □

Art for the Masses • The Continuity of Working-Class History

NORMAN GOLDBERG

Art for the Masses: A Radical Magazine and Its Graphics, 1911-1917, by Rebecca Zurier, 216 pp. Illustrated, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, \$29.95.

Commenting about the Contragate scandal, author Gore Vidal, on a note of mixed resignation and abhorrence, referred to the entire post-World War II period in American history as having resembled a nightmare. Although he did not elaborate, the true meaning of Vidal's nightmare can be fully grasped only when we recognize the post-war years as the age of anti-communism. More than four decades of ceaseless anti-communist indoctrination, through seven successive Administrations, from Truman to Reagan, and now Bush, has polluted the United States with a garbage heap of lies, reaching its height in the 1988 Presidential election, where it was openly charged that the word "liberal" was something akin to treason.

One of the aspects of the age of anti-communism has been the ignoring of American working-class history by the ruling circles and their academic servants, or the revision of that history to suit their interests. Nevertheless, this history has often found ways of overcoming the censorship of omission and alteration, due largely to the fact that it is a living history, that is, it is "re-lived" under new conditions by the overwhelming mass of working men and women. It accounts for the sustained popularity of films and television plays that deal with working people, even when they are poorly done. The re-enactment on screen of the part of life that consumes the major energies of the people is "re-lived" by them in art.

The book, *Art For The Masses* confirms the validity of working-class life as art. Even though it deals with an earlier period of history, it is a refreshing antidote for large numbers of people, who have grown weary of the hollow repetition

of official anti-labor and anti-communist cant.

This is a noteworthy book, a vivid account of economic and political conditions in the USA during the early part of this century, as seen by great illustrators and caricaturists. The inspiration for the book originated from an exhibition held at Yale University in 1985-86 and also by the Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris Gallery in New York City.

Rebecca Zurier has done an exhaustive job of assembling the contents, aided by a vast array of assistance from individuals and institutions. It is a welcome work of documentation and enlightenment of an important chapter in socialist and burgeoning communist history.

This is the story of *The Masses*, the energetic magazine of radical opinion from 1911 to 1917. It began as a monthly journal under the guidance of two unlikely collaborators, Piet Vlag, a Dutch working-class socialist and Rufus Weeks, an insurance executive who provided financial backing for its first year of publication. It quickly attracted to its editorial board George Bellows, John Sloan, Art Young, Cornelia Barnes and Boardman Robinson—all artists of the first rank together with writers Floyd Dell and Max Eastman.

The Masses rapidly grew in fame because of its radical and socialist positions on pressing issues of the day, as well as serving as a forum for "subversive" literary and artistic expression. It offered the work of writers such as Carl Sandburg, Lincoln Steffens, Emma Goldman, Randolph Bourne, Eugene O'Neill, Mabel Dodge, Mike Gold, John Reed and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. Its pages shone with illustrations by John Barber, Maurice Becker, Glenn O. Coleman, Arthur B. Davies, Stuart Barber, Adolph Dehn, Alice Beach Winter, Robert Minor, Hugo Gellert and Robert Henri. It was the magazine of record for class-conscious literature and art of its day.

All the currents and cross-currents of social protest were addressed in the pages of this remarkable publication. It was a period of worsening conditions for workers, a time of strikes and demonstrations against unemployment, low wages, long hours and hazards of work. These were also the years of labor organization, the beginnings of a socialist movement and emerging struggles for women's rights. *The Masses* was in the forefront of it all. It exposed capitalist corruption and jingoism, and it led the protest against America's entry into the imperialist First World War.

Because Marxist thought was as yet insufficiently formed, *The Masses* was a composite of the assorted radical views prominent at the time. Together with clear-thinking socialist ideas, it featured hues of anarchism, utopianism, humanism and pacifism. It debated the newly discovered Freudianism, flirted with bohemian lifestyle and polemicized on whether art and literature had social obligations or were free personal pursuits. On the question of women's equality, it held confused positions, a curious mix of militant advocacy blurred by manifestations of male gallantry. Its indifference to racism and the oppression of African Americans was based on ignorance and insularity. Its views were influenced by the narrow class approach of the Socialist Party, which saw in racial equality a threat to the jobs of white workers. These were serious defects in an otherwise fighting Left publication, the *enfant terrible* of American journalism. While its circulation averaged about 20,000, *The Masses* was influential and was widely subscribed to by activists, labor leaders, scholars, publishers, editors and politicians. President Woodrow Wilson read *The Masses*.

Art For the Masses is a book about the magazine's graphics. It is filled with striking examples of critical realist illustrations, trenchant interpretations of the political landscape, done in stark black-and-white, using lithographic crayon or brush and ink. It was an art of immediacy, created to meet the technical demands of inexpensive reproduction.

Artist and teacher Robert Henri introduced the lithographic crayon as a medium for illustration when he acquainted his artist-colleagues with the prints of Honoré Daumier, the 19th century caricaturist who was a master lithographic artist. Other *Masses* artists preferred working

with pen and ink, wash, pencil and mixed media, lending visual variety to the printed pages. Dynamic caricature, illustration and cartoon propagated the cause of the working class and rejected the neutrality of pure aesthetics. The successful fusion of content and form created an aesthetic dimension whereby propaganda became art.

Art For The Masses can serve as a source of instruction for the present generation of left-oriented political artists, most of whom have been brought up under the influence of the fashionable artistic trends of the more recent period. Many of these artists utilize the properties of Expressionism and Primitivism, attracted by their characteristics of distortion and simplification. Or else they are drawn to variations of new technology as art forms, geometrics, positive and negative photo montage, typography and three-dimensional installations as means of making significant social and political statements. These art forms, like all art forms, are in and of themselves impartial. Their effectiveness as artistic means depends on what is done with them to achieve a satisfactory end. In exhibitions, books and, most particularly, in editorial art and illustrations for articles in commercial and alternative newspapers and magazines, artists reveal a state of mind divorced from the responsibility of arousing viewer response.

Theirs is an art frequently spiked with arcane metaphors and symbols, highly personalized and stylized. The apparent idea is that political art is at its dramatic best when it transcends the level of direct expression. This is a longstanding belief common to sections of both the bourgeois and liberal-left press. As an example, both sponsor enigmatic forms of illustrations for their editorials and political articles. This insularity in graphics sets up a barrier to popular comprehension and engagement. It is also intimidating. The viewer is cowered, made to feel culturally inferior, even while desiring to empathize and be supportive of what is offered as progressive political art.

These artists need to solve the problem of visual coherence, which is a subtle coalescence of art and politics addressed to the largest possible audience at its highest level of comprehension. These artists should not look at *Art For the Masses* in a mechanical way or to copy style and

technique. This would be going backwards. Political art for our times should explore every mean of expression that modern society has to offer. The point is to master the means as a tools for lucid transmission. It is within the framework of the dynamics of visual coherence that today's political artists should study this book and the history it depicts. They may then come to understand why that direct, unfettered and animated realism was and still is popular. They may then also be able to overcome the difficulties found in their particular modes of artistic commentary.

In 1917, *The Masses*, accused of treasonable activities because of its opposition to America's entry into the war, crippled by court actions, its postal rights revoked, ceased publication. Shortly thereafter, a new magazine, the *Liberator* appeared. Many of *The Masses* editors were on it, but it included new names like Claude McKay, Mike Gold and Hugo Gellert. The political content deepened as it reported news of the Bolshevik Revolution, including Lenin's famous 1918 "Letter To American Workers."

After several hectic years of publication, be-

set by financial problems and political dissension, Mike Gold, Hugo Gellert, Joseph Freeman and others felt it was time to publish a new journal, one that would reflect the outlook of the growing young Communist Party. In 1926, they founded the *New Masses*, continuing the best traditions of *The Masses* and *Liberator* under new conditions, and carrying on the class struggle on the economic, political and cultural fronts for another generation.

When *Art For The Masses* was published, it was reviewed on the front page of the *The New York Times Book Review* in a detached, semi-reverential "speak-no-evil-of-the-dead" tone. This is the posture usually reserved for the socialist and communist past, the presumption being that it is respectable (and safe) to accord recognition to the Left of yesterday, especially if it can be separated from the present day. But this history, as shown in art, is not dead, indeed, it can never die. *Art For The Masses* is working-class history that points the way for what is yet to come. It is history for the future.

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